

Solo Transcription of Jeff Beck's "Blue Wind"

Guitar Player

DECEMBER 1999

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West African
Blues Session

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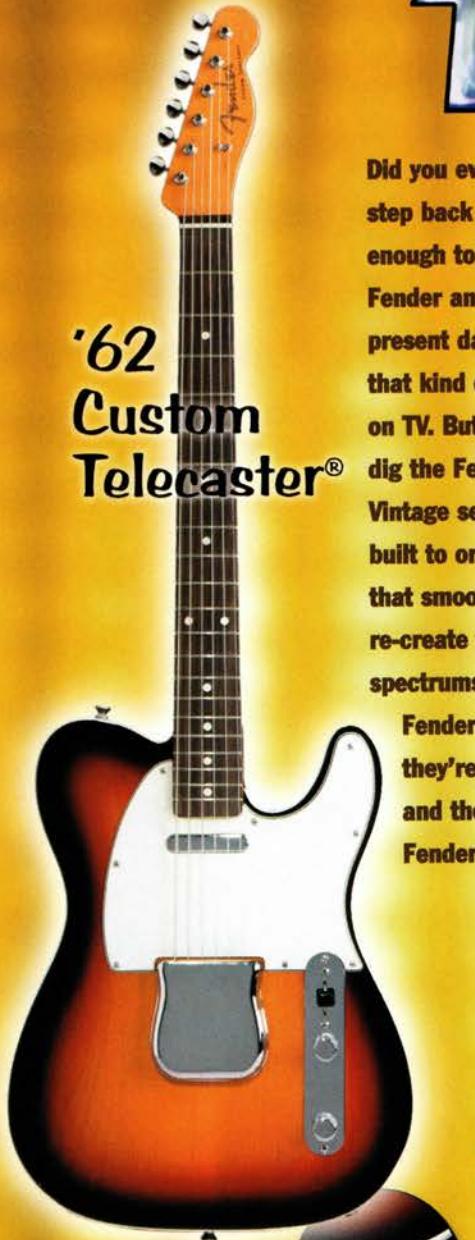
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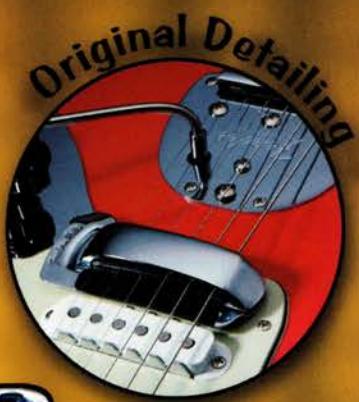


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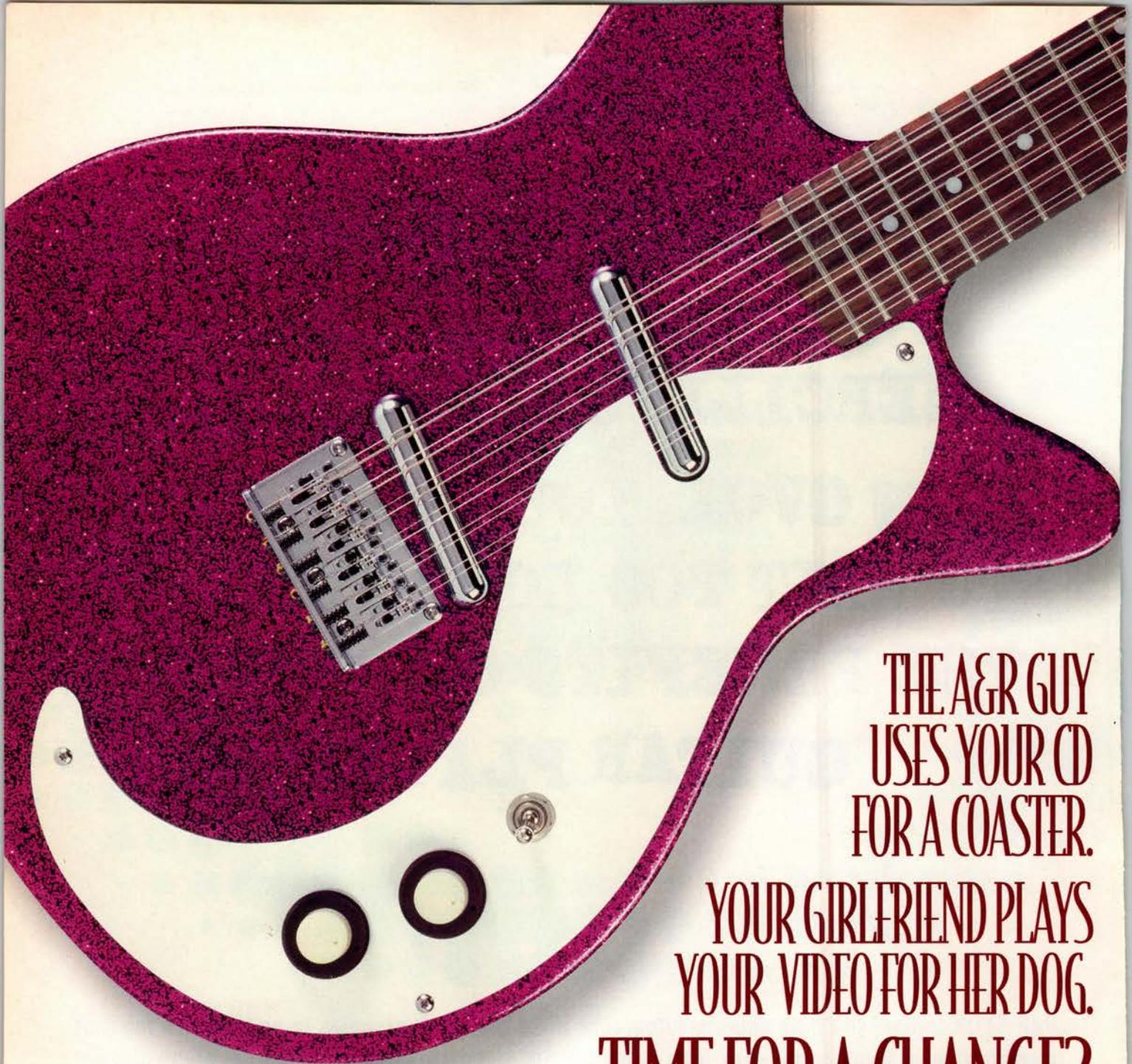
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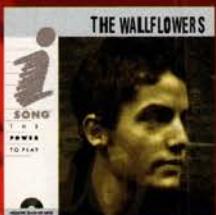
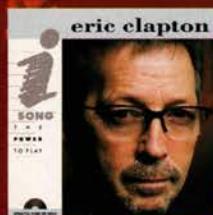
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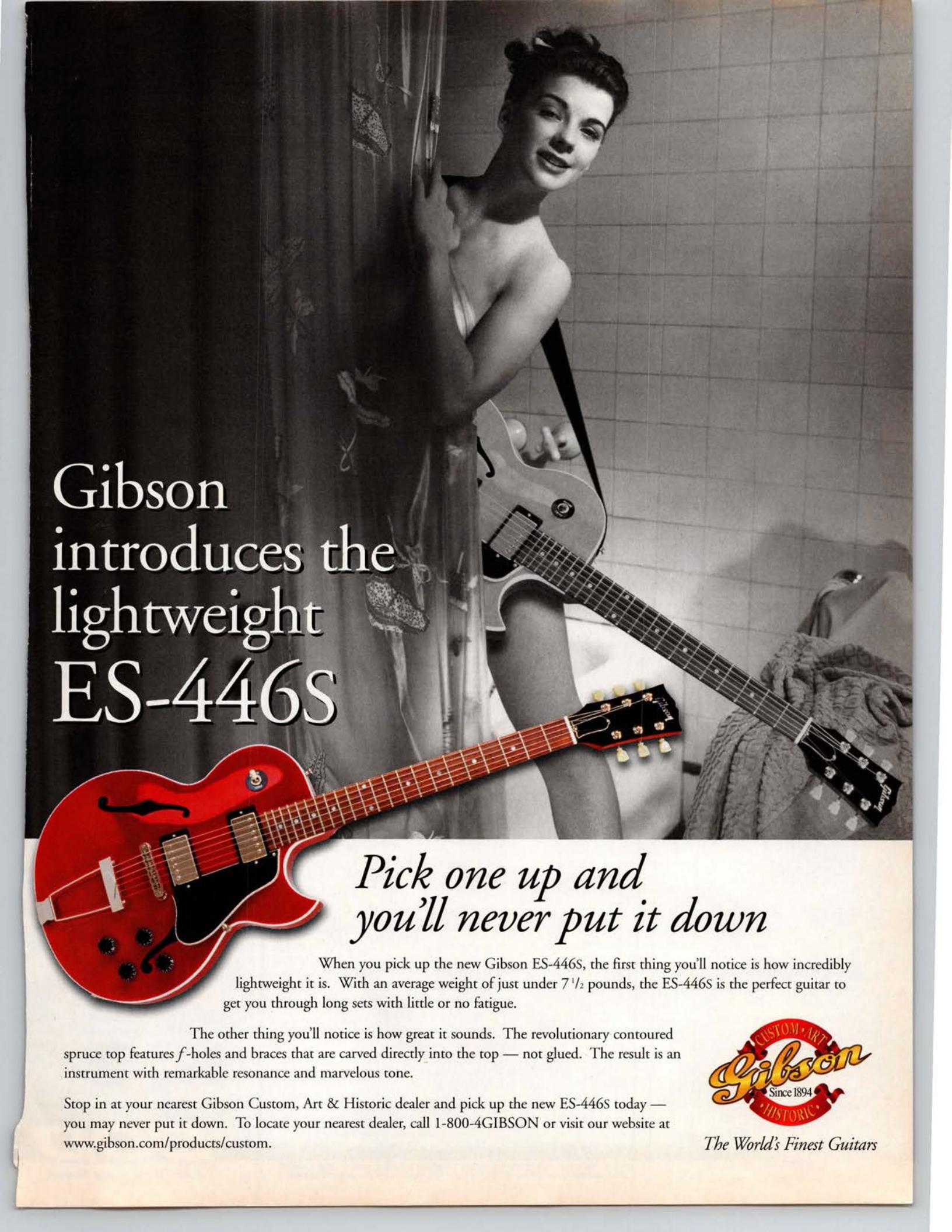
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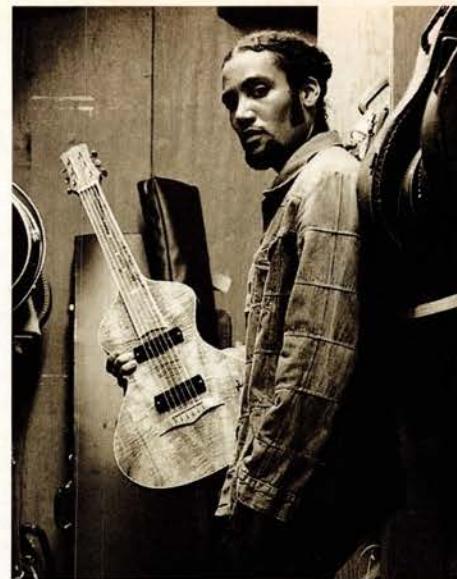
Parameters available include:

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- Modulation Depth • Amount
- Delay Time • Decay • Level
- Regeneration/Feedback



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but the
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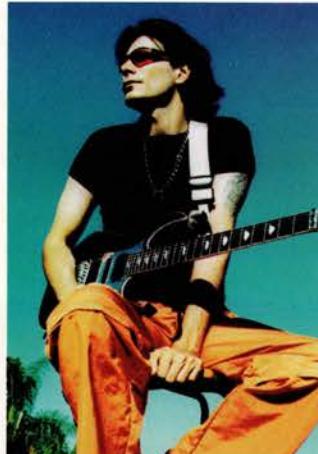
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Soundhole

Millennium Schmillennium

When that big lighted ball swoops down on Times Square and drop kicks the 20th Century into coffee-table picture books, it will simply be another new year for me. Hey, why add to the pressure of assessing the past 12 months—and forging idealized resolutions for the year to come—by carrying the baggage for an entire *century*? It's easy to leave Y2K hysteria to the paranoid, predictions of future events to 900-number psychics, and "Lifestyle 2000" features to fashion mags and copycats. Just say no.

After all, it is enough of a frightening proposition to deal with the detritus of a single year—all the triumphs and tragedies, smart moves and idiotic screw-ups, and so on. The assessment process is especially brutal for a magazine staff, as anyone with a 33-cent stamp or e-mail access can unload on you. Every day, the *GP* editors toil under

an extremely focused critical microscope. Every cover, photo caption, gear list, lesson, and article is scrutinized by readers and, quite often, commented upon.

The weird thing is—we wouldn't have it any other way. For one thing, the majority of commentary is extremely complimentary. (Hurray!) But even more important than laudatory e-mail is the fact that we can *interact* with our reader community. While we feel it's our job to expose you to new and exciting areas, we also take measures to ensure that the majority of *GP* fans are getting what they want from the mag.

To this end, every single letter and e-mail that finds its way to the office is distributed to the staff. And although we don't have the time to answer even 0.05% of our mail, we seriously consider all the rants and suggestions. For example, Jim McManus offered via e-mail that "Bench Test snapshots would be much improved by adding the price

of the gear being reviewed—don't make readers hunt through copy to find out how much something costs." Good call. We initiated the practice with the Nov. '99 issue.

Of course, we can't act on every suggestion, and we know our decisions will not please everyone. The most we can ask is that readers understand we're scouring the guitar community to discover new ideas about craft, creative concepts, and tone sculpting for the sole purpose of *sharing* this information. Our plan for the coming months is to unveil fresh looks, new features, and improved synergy between print and online offerings—all designed to make *GP* an essential (and totally *fun*) tool for serious players.

So although I can't hang with Millennium madness, I am committed to making *GP* 2000 an even better magazine than *GP* 1999. And that gig is worth getting obsessed about because we *all* win.



• • •
We've added a new staffer—Advertising Sales Assistant Michael Montgomery. A guitarist and bassist for eight years, young Monty carts around a '60s psychedelia jones and "five volumes of exquisitely bad 4-track recordings." (Which is actually *way* hipper than the fact that he's a Stanford grad.) Welcome to the family, Michael!

—MICHAEL MOLENDA ■

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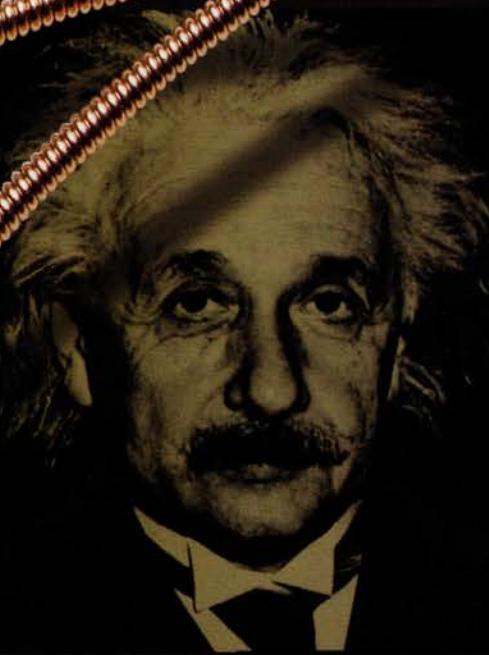
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Feedback

Acoustic-Electrics

I enjoyed your October '99 cover story, "Best Budget Acoustic-Electrics." However, I would like to point out one small mistake: The Guild DV4 has a 25^{5/8}" scale, not 25.4" as reported. All full-sized Guild acoustics and Artist Awards are built with a 25^{5/8}" scale. Small-bodied acoustic-electrics such as the F30 and Songbird, and all electric guitars have a 24^{3/4}" scale.

Joseph Ruggieri
E. Greenwich, RI

We undershot the mark a bit. According to Guild, the scale measures less than 25 1/2" on the high-E string to almost 25 5/8" on the low-E. Many makers measure down the G string, which on a full-size Guild would yield a scale length of 25 1/2".

—AT

Larry Carlton

I imagine how much I enjoyed hearing "Kid Charlemagne" on my car radio after reading your Larry Carlton feature ("The Return of Mr. 335," Oct. '99). I confess to not being as well-rounded as some guitar fans, but your magazine keeps opening new doors and providing new insights into the instrument I have loved and played for 30 years.

Lynn Hopewell
Jamestown, ND

I just wanted to say a sincere thank you for the superb Larry Carlton article. The man's playing is nothing short of masterful. Your in-depth articles, product reviews, and lessons are the reason why *Guitar Player* is the only guitar magazine I read and subscribe to. Please keep up the excellent work, and I'll keep watching my mailbox. *Guitar Player* rocks!

James Meyerhoffer
Richmond, VA

Larry Carlton's Fender "Deluxe" on p. 65 of the October issue appears to be a Vibrolux.

James Doherty
Holliston, MA

You're right! We blew it. We took the info from Carlton's current gear list and foolishly neglected to double-check the photo. Consider us properly embarrassed.

—MM

Johnny Ramone

I was flipping through a few pages of the October issue when *bam*, this sonic blast from the past—like three lightning-fast power chords—knocked me from my chair. There was Johnny Ramone! (I figured the folks at *GP* had

long ago dismissed minor league players.) In these days of vintage fetishism, gigabyte gear, and monster technique, the Ramones' gospel of "back to the basics" rings just as true as it did in the days of soft-rock super groups.

Darrell Stampf
Knoxville, TN

I always await the arrival of *GP*, but this month—blah! When the Oct. '99 guitar hero ("Heroes: Johnny Ramone") is someone I can outplay, what is that saying? How about Jeff Beck, Peter Frampton, David Gilmour, Eric Johnson, Billy Corgan, or James Iha? These artists have talent that even someone who doesn't like their music can admire. Playing three chords and *admiring* the fact that you "can make 500 guitars sound the same" is *not* guitar hero material. When Johnny Ramone learns his scales and can play with the likes of Al Di Meola, then let him have the Heroes column.

Phil Gowan
Redding, CA

Site Reading

I found out about Vision Music in your July '99 Site Reading column, and boy, was I blown away. Vision Music (www.visionmusic.com) is everything you could dream of and more—it's the greatest guitar instruction site on the Web!

Darin Quan
Salinas, CA

Transcriptions

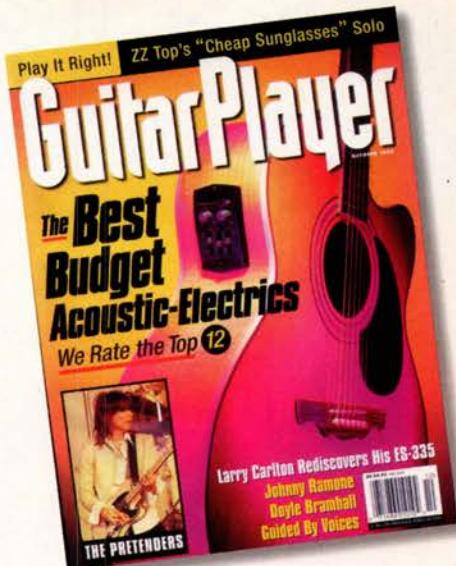
What a great magazine! I recently began playing again after a long absence, and bought the Aug. '99 issue at the newsstand. If that magazine wasn't enough to sell a subscription, then the "Cream" on the cake was the September issue—the transcription and discussion of Clapton's "Sunshine of Your Love" solo was fun. Keep the transcriptions coming.

John Iolia
Kingston, NY

Cover Artists

The debate of who graces the cover each month is a non-issue (no pun intended). In all honesty, I have very little knowledge of many of the guitar slingers who make your cover. The beauty is that there is always *something* that perks my interest. Thanks again for the great magazine, and I will continue to read up on whoever makes the cover.

Dale Hobbs
via Internet



Peter Green Huff

I've been a subscriber for a while now—and *GP* is clearly in its own league—but somebody has to rein in whoever wrote the review of Fleetwood Mac's *Shrine '69* (Reviews, Sept. '99). I understand that in the late '60s, any white guy who could bend a string was considered a great bluesman, but Peter Green as transcendental? That is unbelievable.

The writer of the review calls Green's phrasing "stunning," but if you listen to the disc, all you find are poorly executed clichés. Are single-note, B.B. King box licks stunning to you guys? Green doesn't even seem comfortable with the full fretboard, and his turnarounds peter away with no definition at all. The reviewer then calls Green's timbres "magical"—which is either an attempt to sound intellectual, or the result of a three-martini lunch. Either way it is a weird way to describe Green's "it's time for tea" tone. The review of *Shrine '69* should read as follows: If you like simple I-IV-V progressions with no coloring or fills played at a coma-inducing rhythm, you'll love this CD.

Anonymous
via Internet

Oops!

In the Nov. '99 Back Track, Ex. 2's last mode is incorrectly labeled. It should read "B Locrian." The text and charts are correct.

In addition, as we've been using the term "Kluson-style" to identify a particular type of tuning machine, we should mention that Kluson is a registered trademark of WD Music Products, Inc.

Address correspondence to Feedback, c/o Guitar Player, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402, or e-mail us at guitplyr@mfi.com. GP regrets that until the advent of the 40-hour workday we will not be able to answer every letter.

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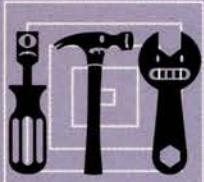


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Left: Starfire V Right: Starfire II



toolbox

Essential Info for Guitarists

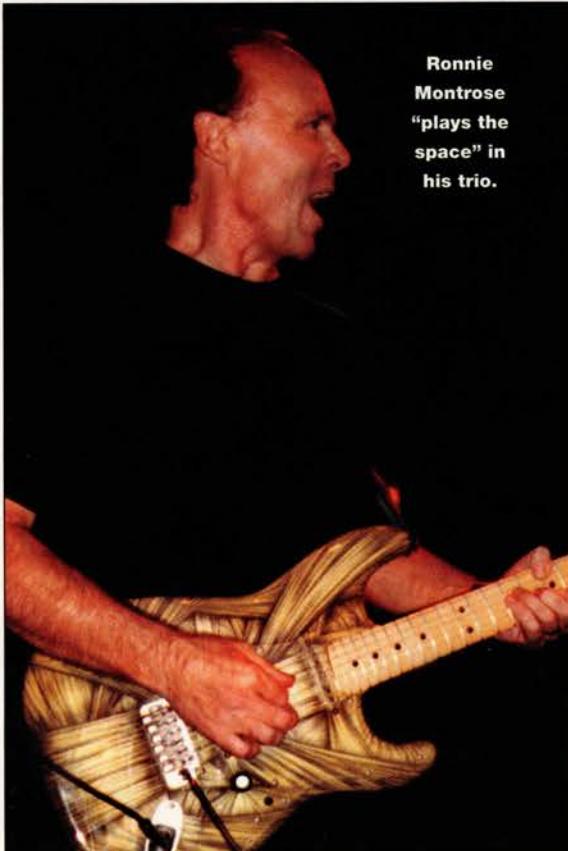
Fretwire

DEBUTANTE'S DEBUT: Since their break-up in 1997, all has been quiet on the **Urge Overkill** front. But the silence will be broken in February 2000, with former Urge frontman/guitarist **Nash Kato's Debutante**, which will be released on **Pearl Jam** guitarist **Stone Gossard's** Loosegroove label. The album features guest appearances from guitarists **Josh Freese (Guns N' Roses)** and **Nils St. Cyr**. . . .

STRUNG OUT: In his world travels, guitarist **Darryl Purpose** has met many musicians in dire need of the most basic equipment—strings. Along with **Kevin Deame**, he has started the Second String Project, which asks fellow strummers to donate used strings to colleagues who can't afford—or do not have access to—replacement strings. Donations can be sent to Kevin Deame, 28 Ladd Rd., Ellington, CT 06029, and should be labeled either as



Performance Notes: Power Trios



Ronnie Montrose
"plays the space" in his trio.

courtesy of a Seymour Duncan-loaded Fender Custom Shop Strat plugged into a Mesa/Boogie Maverick and a Fender Super Champ. (The speakers of both amps are disconnected and their signal sent to a dummy load, then to a Palmer speaker simulator, and finally to a Hafler Pro 500 power amp.)

"Getting a big sound makes it easier for me to relax, take a breath, and let the groove guide me," says Montrose. "I don't feel the need to overplay. For me, the best way to approach the guitar in a power trio is to do less soloing and more chord comping with solo notes strategically inserted between rhythm parts. The best example of this type of player is Pete Townshend—he's my idol in that area."

Improvisation is another key to exploiting the creative potential of a power trio. "I'm not sure there's any other reason to be in a power trio," remarks Montrose. "Of course, in order to make improvisation work, each band member must be a great listener, have the ability to both lead and follow the jams, and show respect for the function of space. If you get that going, nothing will be lacking from the music—you'll never even miss the other instruments."

—SHAWN HAMMOND

Guitarists in power trios often worry about filling the space normally occupied by keyboards, horns, or another guitarist. But according to veteran rocker Ronnie Montrose, this outlook completely ignores one of the trio format's greatest benefits.

"You have to understand that sparseness is a wonderful and inherent part of the pow-

er trio experience," he says. "The space *has* to be there in order for the music to breathe. Just listen to Led Zeppelin, Cream, or Hendrix. Those guys didn't worry about filling space—they treated space as another band member!"

However, the importance of musical space doesn't mean trio guitarists are limited to small, unobtrusive guitar sounds. Montrose typically dials in a *massive* tone—



Heroes: Maybelle Carter

In August 1927, a talent scout for the Victor Recording Company—who was simply on a quest to document “hill country music”—managed to record two legends in Bristol, Tennessee: Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family. Although Rodgers sold millions of records, it was 18-year-old Maybelle Carter who singlehandedly changed the face of country guitar. Until that time, the guitar had taken a backseat to banjo and fiddle, but Carter moved her Stella (and later, a Gibson L-5) into the spotlight with bass-string runs embellished with powerful hammer-ons and pull-offs. Her flourishes became known as “Carter picking” (or the “church lick”), and she would influence scores of country, bluegrass, and rock and roll guitarists including Hank Williams, Merle Haggard, Woody Guthrie, Willie Nelson, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, and even Jerry Garcia—who once said there was a bit of the Carter Family in everything he wrote.

From 1927 until the group

disbanded in 1943, the Carter Family (Maybelle, her brother-in-law A.P. Carter, and her sister-in-law Sara Carter) recorded classics such as “Wabash Cannonball,” “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” “Wildwood Flower,” and “Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes.” Although the group didn’t travel much, their records and radio performances had a colossal effect on country music—in fact, some musicologists believe that bluegrass could not have existed without the Carter Family.

After leaving her famous trio, Carter formed the Carter Sisters and Mother Maybelle with her daughters Helen, June, and Anita, and continued to perform until a year before her death in 1978. Although she tended to stay in the background—she brought Chet Atkins onstage when the group joined the Grand Ole Opry because she feared her style wasn’t “modern”—Carter made a legendary appearance at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival, performed with son-in-law Johnny Cash on his TV shows, and recorded the landmark three-LP



The Carter Family

set *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in 1973. Her popular resurgence in the '60s and '70s established

Carter not only as one of America's pioneering guitarists, but also as country music's matriarch.

—DAVID REIDY



Site Reading: Goodies Online

Sign Here...Autographs

The holiday gift season is fast approaching—so what can you get for the music fanatic who has everything? How about a Fender Strat autographed by his or her fave guitar hero? At press time, this site had instruments signed by Eric Clapton (\$1,500), Jimmy Page (\$750), Neil Young (\$1,200), Johnny Ramone (\$450), Mick Jagger and Keith Richards (\$900), and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (\$450). www.autographdealer.com

OnlineRock

This virtual music community offers a free personal Web site (and an easy way to register it with nine search engines), classi-

fieds, a book store, technology pages, music news, bulletin boards, and a chat room. www.onlinerock.com

Shareware Music Machine

A bounty of free and dirt-cheap software is yours for the download at this shareware/freeware emporium. You can search for programs by specific title or type. The offerings include audio-recording software, effects processors, de-noise and de-ess programs, and MP3 players and encoders. www.hitsquad.com/smm

Talk Guitar

The name pretty much says it all—along with online discussions dealing with any

and all guitar-flavored topics, the site includes lessons, chord diagrams, classifieds, and song lyrics. www.talkguitar.com

Zebra Music

Ultimately, the man behind this site, Steve Veloudos, wants to sell you his “Advance Your Musical Career Home Study Seminar” tapes. But even if you’re not in the market for guidance at a price, this site does offer some cool, *free* tools. The Gig Sharing Network can help you find a band to share the bill at the local watering hole (but you’ll have to duke it out over who headlines), the record labels page has contact information for A&R folk, and other features include chat, music business FAQs, and industry-related articles. www.zebramusic.com

—LAURELEI



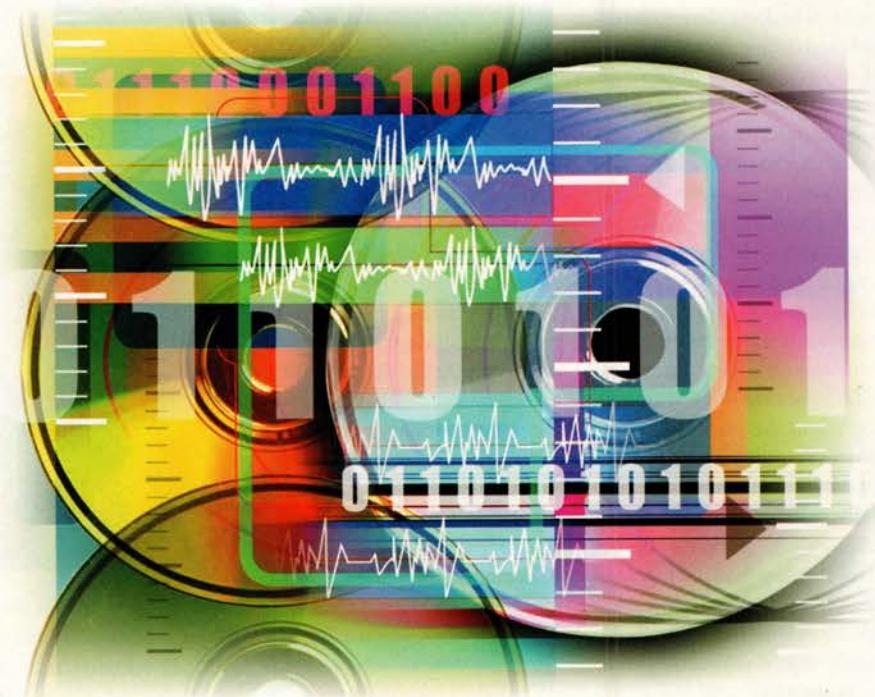
Fretwire

"sets" or "singles." For the full story, go to the Second String page at www.darrylpurpose.com. . . .

DESERTED OASIS: Band members are dropping like flies from the **Oasis** camp. First, guitarist **Paul "Bonehead" Arthurs** quit the Brit-pop band after an eight-year tour of duty, and now it has been reported that bassist **Paul McGuigan** has also jumped ship. At press time, there were no reports of replacements or future plans—a name change to "the Gallagher Brothers," maybe?—but you can watch the drama unfold at www.oasisinet.com. . . .

PASSING NOTES: Candelas Guitars co-founder **Porfirio Delgado**, 85, passed away on July 28. Delgado opened Candelas Guitars in 1948 with his brother **Candelario**. The East Los Angeles company has supplied guitars to such luminaries as **Jose Feliciano**, **Los Lobos**, and **Andres Segovia**, and is currently being run by Delgado's grandsons, Tomas and Manuel. . . . **HEADBANGING**

Studio Log: Real-World References



The best resources for brilliant mixes are probably scattered all over your studio: commercial CDs. These discs are real-world "seminars" on how to forge disparate sounds into seductive blends of stereophonic majesty. Surprisingly, few home recordists avail themselves of such audio wisdom—especially when it's so easy to cop mixing licks from hitmakers and creative geniuses. All you have to do is reference your own mixes to those of the pros. Here's how:

Get connected. If your console has dedicated selector buttons for the main stereo mix and a 2-track return, you're set. Just plug your CD player into the board's 2-track input, and hit the buttons to switch between your mix and the CD. Another option is plugging the CD player into two input channels (you'll need RCA-to-1/4" adapters for the mixer connection) and punching the solo buttons (or mutes) in and out to swap between the multitrack and CD audio. As tonal perception is colored by volume, be

sure to set equal levels for the two sources.

What you're looking for. It's all about relationships. With both the CD and your mix running through the same monitor system, it's easy to pick out sonic discrepancies. How loud are the guitars and vocals on the CD compared to your mix? Have you pumped way too much bass into your mix? The list goes on and on. Basically, you're pitting your soundscape against the work of established artists and determining *specifically* where your mix sucks—as well as where it shines.

What it all means. The idea is not to copy the sound of the pro mix at the expense of your personality. Just take the evidence gleaned from these head-to-head comparisons and fix what *you* consider weaknesses. For example, if your guitars sound thin and spitty compared to the tracks on your favorite CD, ease up on the high EQ and beef up the low-mids. Knowledge really *is* power—and studying the work of proven mix masters is the best way to refine your mixes.

—MICHAEL MOLENA



Pawnshop Prize: The Reverberation

Been feeling a little parched lately? Perhaps your favorite amp is reverb-less—or worse, your combo has reverb, but its tone is more skank than tank. Shy of lugging a tile bathroom to your gigs, your ambience options go something like this: Shell out \$600 for a vintage Fender stand-alone reverb (less for the reissue), pay even more for a boutique version, or plug into a lower-priced digital box.

But if you're *really* lucky, you might be able to score a Reverberation reverb unit. This aptly named orphan bears no company logo, but its appearance screams "Ampeg"—asterisk level indicators, a rubber Daisy doorstop footswitch, a hole-punched rear-panel grille, and special "clutch" screws. The Reverberation's simple control panel includes one knob for volume and one knob for reverb. Under the hood, two tubes—a 12AX7 and a 6CG7—share space with a full-size, 2-spring reverb tank.

The Rev's tones are remarkably transparent. Even at maximum reverb settings, some



of the dry signal is blended into the mix, ensuring clarion articulation. Not bad for \$270—the asking price in the Manhattan shop where this specimen was found. The Reverberation is a great way to wet your

amp's whistle without drowning your tone, and home recordists could also keep one on-hand as an organic alternative to digital ambience. *Unit courtesy of Mojo Guitars, New York, New York.*

—ADAM LEVY



Learning Curve: Dominant Seventh Workout

Major, minor, and dominant 7ths are the three primary chord types in contemporary music, and you'll need a vocabulary of licks to play over these chords when they pop up in rock, blues, and jazz tunes. For years Jamey Aebersold has been helping musicians expand their vocabularies, and his latest release, *Dominant Seventh Workout* (\$19.95), is a comprehensive boot camp for learning to solo over dominant harmony. A 112-page book provides the patterns and theory that will help you develop strong lines, and two CDs provide live backing tracks for applying what you've learned.

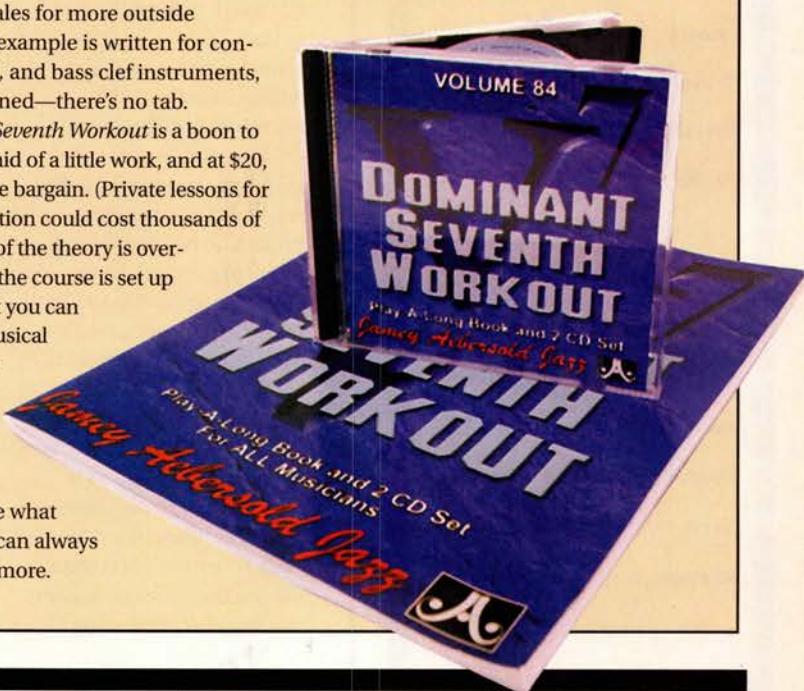
The lesson begins with a long chord and scale theory section. Novices would do well to jump to the warm-up exercises first, then refer back to the theory section as needed. The workout can be as basic—or as complicated—as you want. Many players could spend months running

arpeggios over the cycle of fourths exercises alone. Ambitious students can apply the bebop, diminished, and diminished whole-tone scales for more outside sounds. Every example is written for concert key, *Bb*, *Eb*, and bass clef instruments, but be forewarned—there's no tab.

Dominant Seventh Workout is a boon to anyone not afraid of a little work, and at \$20, it's an incredible bargain. (Private lessons for all this information could cost thousands of dollars.) Some of the theory is overwhelming, but the course is set up so logically that you can treat it like a musical supermarket—stroll down the aisles, take what you want, and leave what you don't. You can always come back for more.

Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc., Box 1244, New Albany, IN 47151; (812) 945-4281; www.jazzbooks.com.

—MATT BLACKETT





Fretwire

HOOPLA: Not enough metal in your diet? Get your fill at Metal Mania. Milwaukee Metalfest producer **Jack Koshick** recently announced a series of festivals all over the United States with more than 100 bands gracing the stage at each show. Tune in to www.metalfest.com, or check the festival listings on the Fretwire page at www.guitarplayer.com for dates, locations, and lineups.

SLIGHT RETURN: Ex-Nine Inch Nails guitarist **Robin Finck** has returned to the band after a brief stint in the Cirque du Soleil orchestra, then hooking up with Guns N' Roses. A representative at Nothing records would confirm no more than Finck was onboard "for the tour," so check back for news on the solid lineup . . . **CLOSURE:**

Remains found inside a wrecked van at the bottom of a ravine have been positively identified as those of former Iron Butterfly bassist **Philip Taylor Kramer**, who had disappeared without a trace in 1995. —LAUREL



Techno Tools: Cheap Computers

Windows-based computers have never been cheaper, so it's time to upgrade your aging CPU, supplement your Mac with a Windows machine, or add a second PC to your setup. Music applications have a different set of requirements than the office world, though, so be sure to check the fine print.

Some Web ready computers cost a few hundred dollars, or are even free—if you're willing to commit to a particular Internet provider for several years. These computers are adequate for MIDI sequencing and basic digital-audio editing, but for hardcore multitracking, their limitations are significant. RAM is usually 64MB (you really want at least 128MB), built-in sound options can make adding higher-quality sound cards difficult, and the typical 4GB hard drive isn't beefy enough for multitracking. Expandability might also be limited, and often, proprietary parts make servicing difficult. If you're serious about desktop audio, you're better off spending the extra bucks for pro performance.

For the biggest bargains, bypass pricey Pentium II and Pentium III machines—as well as boxes based on budget Cyrix or AMD chips (whose digital-audio performance generally doesn't



match Intel's products). Instead, head for Intel's Celeron A chip. Introduced as a low-cost Pentium alternative designed to compete with Cyrix and AMD, the Celeron's performance was initially so deliberately crippled that it was a commercial disaster. But, Intel spruced up the second generation, and surprise: The performance of this budget chip exceeds that of the Pentium II and beats all but the fastest Pentium III's. A 500MHz Celeron A-based bundle with 96MB RAM, a 12GB hard drive, a 56K modem, a 15" monitor, and a DVD drive will typically set you back less than \$1,400.

And prices will get even cheaper! At press time, Intel announced price cuts for the Pentium III.

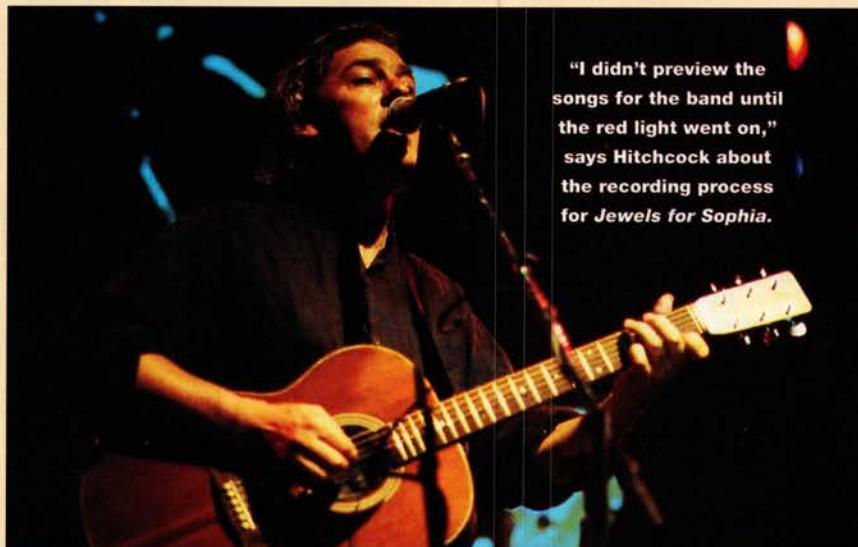
But even if you're the type who wants that extra bit of performance regardless of price, you're still in good shape. AMD is ready to roll out the Athlon, whose price is competitive with the Pentium III, but offers superior floating-point math performance (important for digital audio applications). It's truly a buyer's market, and now even budget computers have the horsepower for thoroughbred digital-audio performance. Don't believe the hype—you *can* get more for less. —CRAIG ANDERTON



Songcraft: Robyn Hitchcock

When Britain's eccentric singer/songwriter Robyn Hitchcock was planning *Jewels for Sophia*, his 16th collection of solo material since 1981, it was suggested that he might benefit from the production insights of L.A. studio dynamo Jon Brion. Though the two had never worked together ("We were put in a cage to see if we'd mate," observes Hitchcock), Brion's spontaneous approach to recording was just what Hitchcock was looking for.

—DAVID SIMONS



"I didn't preview the songs for the band until the red light went on," says Hitchcock about the recording process for *Jewels for Sophia*.

"Trying to re-capture the sound and feel of the demo tape has got to be one of the saddest things in rock music," says Hitchcock. "Demos exist to be rejected. My philosophy is either don't do them at all, or put them out because often they're much better than the finished product."

"This is why I rarely let the musicians hear the songs before we record them. I introduce a song on acoustic guitar, have a one hour re-

hearsal at best, and then let them make up their parts while we're recording. As the musicians aren't trying to re-create something that has already been done on the demo, they have room

to *improvise*, rather than rehearse. When I'm building a song, I don't want to refine it, I want to capture the moment of creation. For me, spontaneity is always the best part of writing."



Street Smarts: Music Business Software



Computer-savvy musicians use software for everything from recording audio to printing CD artwork. But many artists overlook programs

that can help with legal and business issues. While not as sexy as a cool plug-in, music-business software might ultimately do your career a lot more good.

For about the price of a one-

hour legal consultation, for example, you can buy *Automated Contracts for the Entertainment Industry* by Jonathan Earp (\$199 from Entertainment Publishers). The program includes a collection of "fill in the blank" contract forms ranging from band partnership agreements to record deals. It also has copyright and trademark forms.

As it's good business to have written agreements for most of your music deals, the CD-ROM's ready-made contracts are a definite asset. Be careful, though, certain forms are more standardized than others. Copyright and trademark registration forms are government documents and don't vary. Record deals and side-man agreements, on the other hand, don't lend themselves as well to one-size-fits-all forms. In these cases, *Automated Contracts* anticipates an "average" deal and prepares the forms accordingly. But even if different terms are ne-

gotiated, the forms are very helpful as starting points. If things get hairy, however, you'll need to talk to a living, breathing lawyer.

Other types of music-business software include:

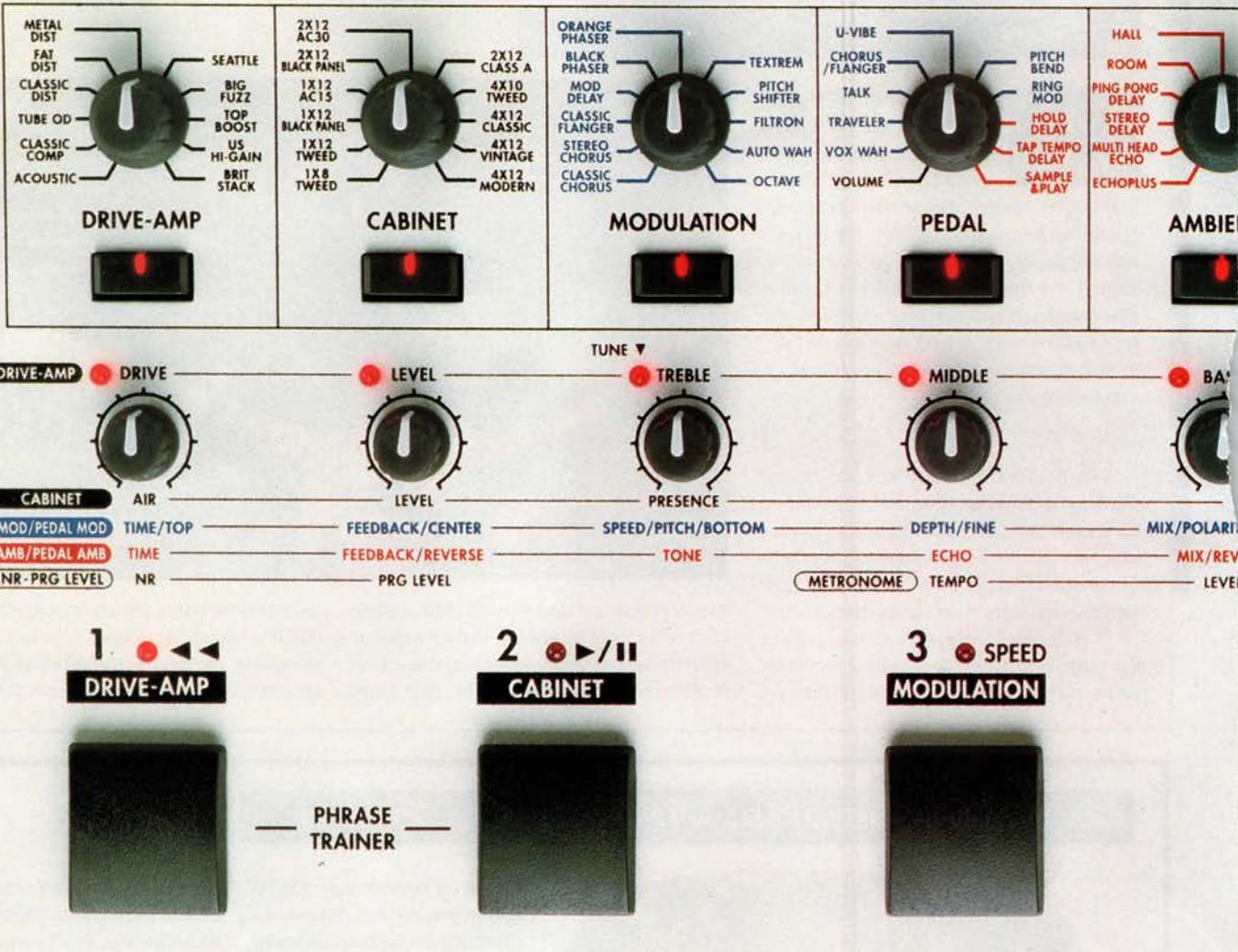
Accounting and royalty tracking. These range from inexpensive "shells" (that you plug into existing spreadsheet software) to specialized programs developed for record companies.

Time tracking. These are valuable session log and billing tools for studio musicians, engineers, or anyone who charges by the hour.

Music publishing. These specialized programs help the self-publisher create a database to keep track of his or her song catalog.

There's more to a successful music career than just making music, so before you max out your hard drive with digital-audio software, be sure to leave some room for programs that keep the business side of your art in order.

—MICHAEL A. ACZON



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one power-packed effect processor. With 56 REMS* effect models that range from classic phasers and distortions to Filtron and Echoplus, the AX1000G generates all the distinctive subtleties of your favorite gear. And the built-in continuous controller pedal gives you all the control you need to realistically manipulate dynamic sounds like Vox wah and U-vibe.

*REMS (Resonant structure and Electronic circuit Modeling System) is Korg's new proprietary modeling technology.



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The AX1000G features easy-to-use knobs—just plug in and nail your tone without a lot of messing around. And it's easy to get great tone to tape with the AX1000G's wide assortment of essential speaker cabinet models.

Plus, the AX1000G is loaded with other great stuff, like a built-in Phrase Sampler that lets you record a phrase (up to 8 seconds) and play it back while you play over it. The Phrase Trainer lets you record up to 16 seconds from a CD player or other source and slow down the playback as much as

25% without changing the pitch. It even has a built-in metronome and auto-chromatic tuner.

All the character of your favorite classic gear, and all the technology you'd expect from ToneWorks. Get down to your authorized retailer and see why the AX1000G is destined to become an instant classic in its own right.

TONEWORKS[®]
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New Gear

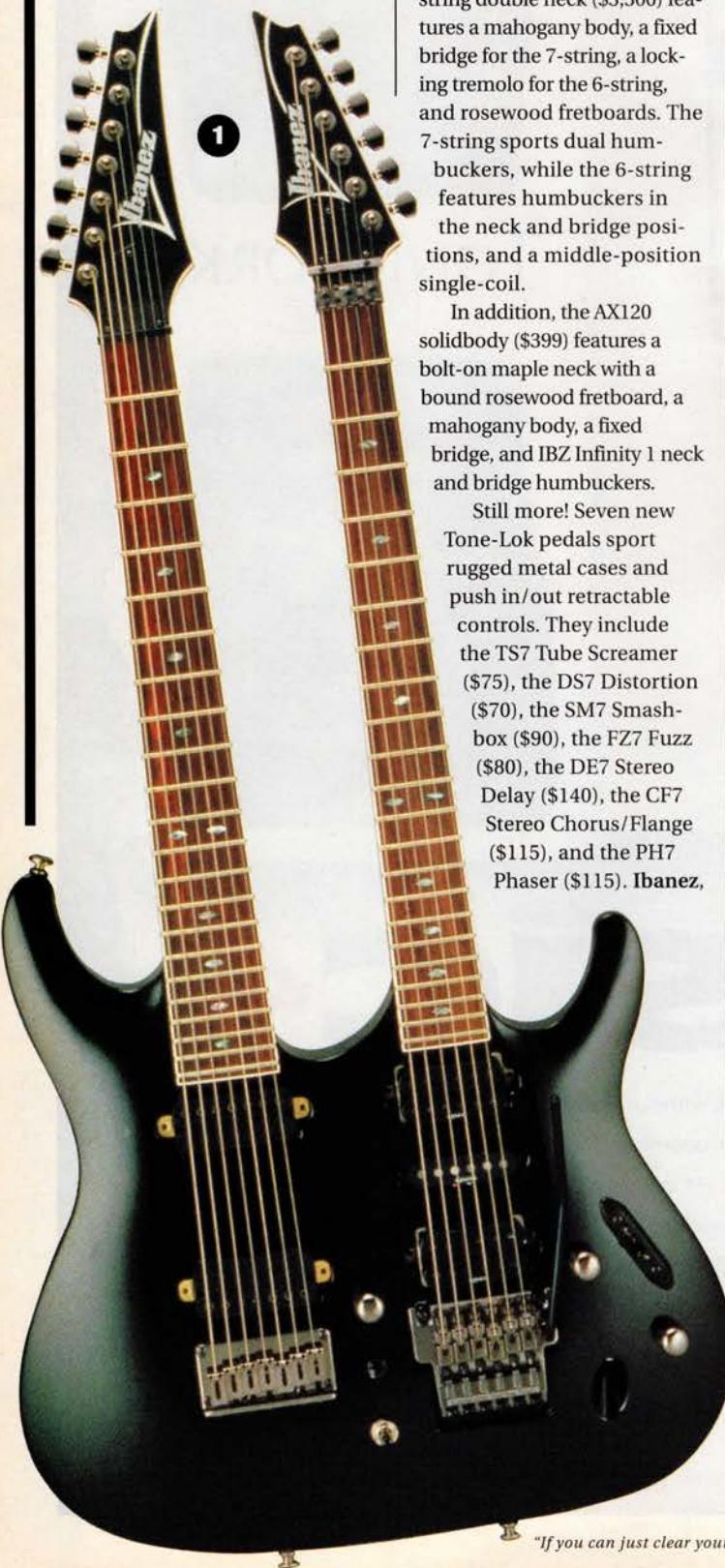
By Darrin Fox

1. IBANEZ

The limited edition STW 6/7-string double neck (\$3,300) features a mahogany body, a fixed bridge for the 7-string, a locking tremolo for the 6-string, and rosewood fretboards. The 7-string sports dual humbuckers, while the 6-string features humbuckers in the neck and bridge positions, and a middle-position single-coil.

In addition, the AX120 solidbody (\$399) features a bolt-on maple neck with a bound rosewood fretboard, a mahogany body, a fixed bridge, and IBZ Infinity 1 neck and bridge humbuckers.

Still more! Seven new Tone-Lok pedals sport rugged metal cases and push in/out retractable controls. They include the TS7 Tube Screamer (\$75), the DS7 Distortion (\$70), the SM7 Smashbox (\$90), the FZ7 Fuzz (\$80), the DE7 Stereo Delay (\$140), the CF7 Stereo Chorus/Flange (\$115), and the PH7 Phaser (\$115). **Ibanez**,



BERKMAN ARTS

Genuine Woody guitar stands (starting at \$65) are handcrafted from a variety of hardwoods, including cherry, oak, maple, mahogany, walnut, and curly aspen. The stands feature non-marring leather back rests and foam-padded bottom supports. A canvas carrying bag is included. **Berkman Arts**, Box 517, Ringwood, IL 60072; (800) 966-3235; www.guitarstands.com.

1726 Winchester Rd., Bensalem, PA 19020; (215) 638-8670; www.ibanez.com.

FENDER

Designed to deliver a tube-like feel, Fender's Dyna-Touch circuitry is featured on six new solid-state combo amps. The 15-watt Bullet Reverb (\$200) sports dual channels (with separate volume and gain controls), an 8" speaker, and reverb. The 30-watt, dual-channel Champion 30 (\$300) features a 10" speaker and reverb. The dual-channel Princeton 65

(\$400) offers a 12" speaker and an effects loop.

Featuring 3-channel operation, the 90-watt Deluxe 90 (\$530) sports a 12" 100-watt Celestion speaker, an effects loop, and reverb. The 3-channel Stage 100 (\$630) packs 100 watts, a 12" Celestion, an effects loop, and a balanced line out—the Stage 160 (\$730) offers the same features, but with *two* 12" Celestions. **Fender**, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85258; (602) 596-9690; www.fender.com.

DOD

Flaunting seven amp models, programmable digital and analog effects, and a funky sci-fi look, the GS30 floor multi-effector (\$220) packs quite a punch. Effects include compression, 3-band EQ, noise gate, chorus, flange, tremolo, phaser, ring modulation, pitch shift (including whammy), wah, auto wah, delay, reverb, and speaker simulation. The GS30 comes stocked with 30 factory presets and 30 user-definable locations, a chromatic tuner, 1/4" mono and stereo outputs, a 1/8" stereo headphone jack, and a fully assignable expression pedal. **DOD**, 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070; (801) 566-8800; www.dod.com.

EVENT ELECTRONICS

Event's Project Studio line of powered monitors features three new models. The PS5 (\$600/pr.) includes a 5.25" polypropylene driver and a 25mm silk-dome neodymium tweeter, the PS6 (\$700/pr.) features a 6.5" polypropylene woofer and a 1" silk-dome tweeter, and the PS8 (\$850/pr.) sports an 8" polypropylene woofer and 1"

silk-dome tweeter. All models are magnetically shielded and feature 100-watt biamplified power sections. **Event Electronics**, Box 4189, Santa Barbara, CA 93140; (805) 566-7777; www.event1.com.

2. MARSHALL

Marshall's newly reissued Micro Stack MG15MS Lead 15 (\$399) touts more gain and fatter low-end than its predecessor. Delivering 15 watts through two 10"-loaded cabinets (one angled, one straight), the reverb-equipped MG15MS sports bass, treble, contour, master-volume, and dual gain controls.

Also, the AS50R Acoustic Combo (\$549) features two channels, (each with volume, bass, and treble controls) and pumps 50-watts through two 8" speakers and a

2



single tweeter. An anti-feedback section includes a phase switch and a frequency-selectable notch filter that can attenuate the offending frequency by 10dB. Other features are chorus (with speed and depth controls), spring reverb (with level and balance controls), a parallel effects loop, an RCA input (for connection of a tape or CD player), and line and direct outputs.

Marshall, 316 S. Service Rd., Melville, NY 11747; (516) 333-9100; www.korg.com.

GIBSON

The SG is enjoying a resurgence, and two new models from Gibson are adding to the fanfare. The SG Classic (\$1,399) features dual P-90 pickups, a beveled mahogany body, chrome tuners (with vintage-white buttons), a mahogany neck with a rosewood fretboard, and a Tuneomatic bridge. The Classic is available in heritage cherry and ebony stain finishes.

The SG/Les Paul with Deluxe Maestro tremolo (\$2,899) comes with two '57 Classic humbuckers, vintage-style Kluson tuners, a mahogany body, and a mahogany neck with a rosewood fretboard. **Gibson**, 1818 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210; (615) 871-4500; www.gibson.com.

FOSTEX

The Fostex VM 200 digital mixer (\$1,499) and VR 800 hard-disk recorder (\$749) offer formidable recording power for a very meek price. The 20-input/8-bus VM 200 mixer features motorized faders, 4-band EQ, onboard digital signal processing, and MIDI control. The VR 800 is an 8-track digital



MACKIE

The 1642-VLZ Pro mixer (\$999) features 16 channels (eight mic/line, and four stereo line pairs) with 3-band active EQ (with sweepable mids) on the mono channels, and 4-band active EQ on the stereo line channels. Each mic channel offers Mackie's new XDR (Extended Dynamic Range) mic preamps and a 75Hz low-cut filter. Other features include four aux sends, four stereo aux returns, eight direct outputs, and dust-proof rotary controls. **Mackie**, 16220 Wood-Red Rd. N.E., Woodinville, WA 98072; (425) 487-4333; www.mackie.com.

recorder with MIDI and Word sync, vari-pitch (+/- 6%), and 99 song memory. **Fostex**, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA 90650; (562) 921-1112; www.fostex.com.

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MAXON

Maxon stompbox reissues include the OD808 Overdrive (\$195), the D&S Distortion & Sustainer (\$189), the AD80 Analog Delay (\$250), and the PT999 Phase Tone (\$199). **Maxon**, dist. by Godlyke, 328 Mason Ave., Haledon, NJ 07508; (973) 835-2100; www.maxonfx.com.



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Dixie Chicks

Emily Robison's Tonal Jamboree



"I've always loved the sound of the Dobro," says Robison. "So I just got an instruction book and taught myself to play."

By Kylē Swenson

They've proved their mettle with more than six million albums sold and 14 big-time awards—including two Grammys—for their debut *Wide Open Spaces*. But a little known fact about the model-esque Dixie Chicks is that they play their own instruments and write some of their own songs—a rarity in the modern country scene, where studio musicians and established songwriters usually prop up the hitmakers.

"Our albums are *not* recorded by studio musicians," asserts multi-instrumentalist Emily Robison. "It may not be the best

playing in the world, but it's us—our records have *our* sound. That's one thing I've missed about music lately. In the '70s, for example, the hip rock bands had a distinctive sound because all the members played. Nashville, however, has gotten so homogenized these days—to the point where everyone is using the same studio guys—that you hear the same licks on everything. I'd much rather hear someone who's not a technically perfect player—who maybe plays a little bit kooky—but who has a *style*."

Despite Robison's modest opinion of her own playing—"I giggled when I heard *GP* wanted

to interview me, because I don't know if I'm worthy"—on the band's latest release, *Fly* [Monument/Sony], her chops are far from suspect. Just check out "Sin Wagon," where her dual banjo solos are so fast it's as if her hands were being chased by the Tasmanian Devil.

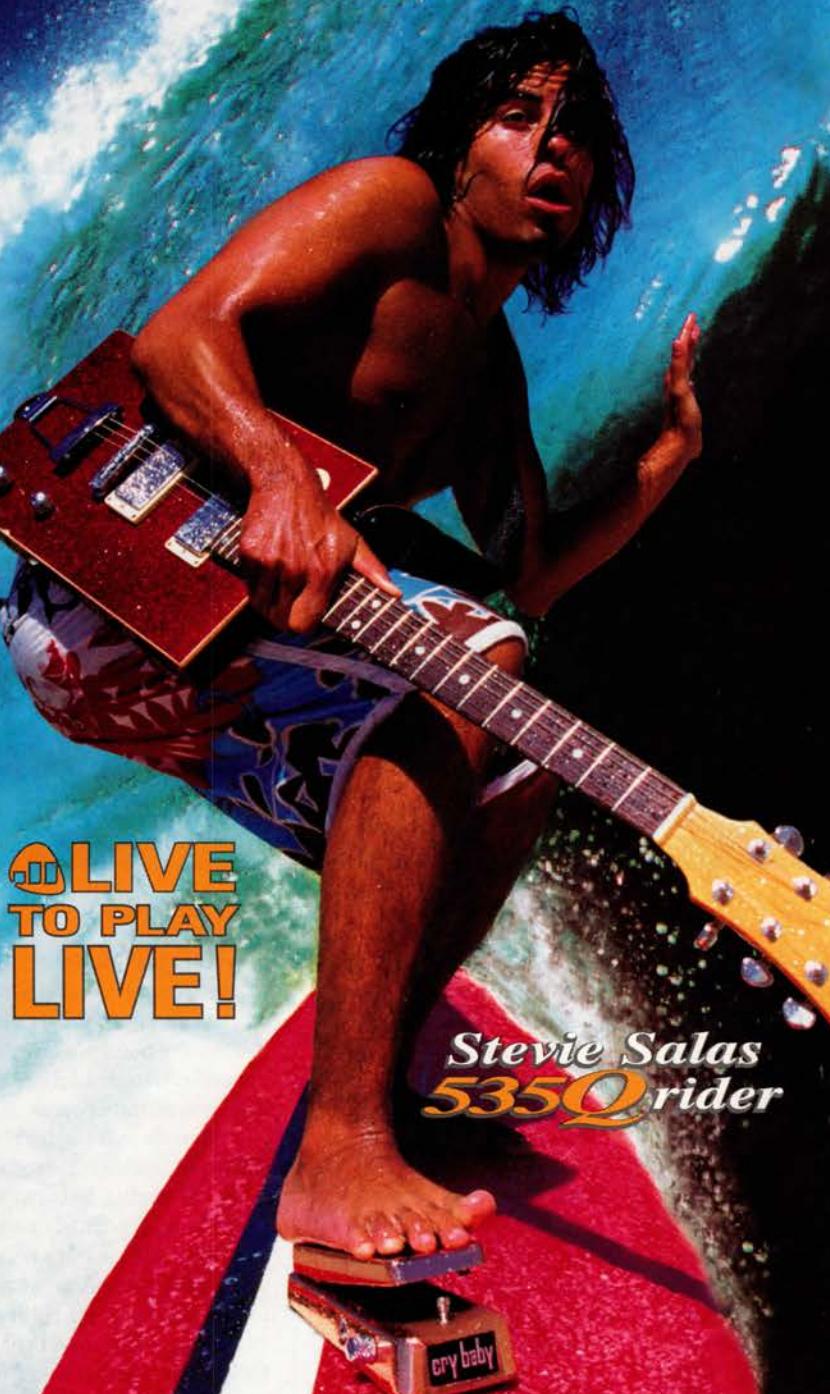
Robison first developed her banjo skills in a bluegrass band at age 12. With her sister Martie Seidel—who plays fiddle, mandolin, and viola—she formed the Dixie Chicks in '89. The original lineup broke up when Robison and Seidel decided to leave traditional bluegrass behind and explore a more mainstream sound.

When singer Natalie Maines (daughter of pedal-steel player Lloyd Maines) joined the Chicks in 1995, the band put away the ten gallon hats and fringe, and dove into country pop.

"When we were playing bluegrass," says Robison, "I was pretty much just playing the banjo. But when we incorporated country and folky stuff, I learned how to play other instruments because banjo didn't sound right on everything. I first picked up the guitar and tuned it to high G like a banjo, but I got sick of retuning the guitars, so I taught myself how to play in standard tuning. I've kept my banjo picks on,

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DIXIE CHICKS

however, because flatpicks still feel foreign to me."

An earnest student, Robison learned how to play Dobro from a Mel Bay book. "The right hand on Dobro is so similar to the banjo—they're kind of kissing cousins—so it wasn't much of a stretch," she says. "The hardest part was learning how to play slide."

During the *Fly* sessions, she also worked up the guts to play lap steel on "If I Fall You're Going Down with Me." "There was lap steel on the demo for that song, and I really wanted to play the part on the album—even though I hadn't played lap steel before," says Robison. "Lap steel seems similar to Dobro, but the scale length is different, so I had to work pretty hard on my intonation. Recording that track was definitely the longest overdub session I had. I tortured our producers."

On *Fly*, the Chicks' ever-expanding tonal spectrum—which encompassed acoustic guitar, Dobro, banjo, lap steel, mandolin, viola, pennywhistle, Hammond B-3 organ, concertina, electric guitar, and other instruments—required some mix magic to avoid cluttered tracks. "It's just one of those putting-the-puzzle-pieces-together things," says Robison of the album's mix sessions. "Coming from bluegrass, however, we know how to step in and step out. It's the same with mixing—you figure out what should be the most prominent instrument at a point in a song, push up the fader level, and then pull it back. It's all about not stepping on anyone's toes." ■

ROBISON'S FLY GEAR

Instruments: Deering Crossfire 5-string electric banjo, '89 Sheehorn resonator guitar, custom Taylor acoustic, Saga Musical Instruments Gold Star acoustic banjo. ("I've played the Gold Star since I was 15," says Robison, "and even though 'mellow banjo' is an oxymoron, I've mellowed mine out so much it feels like that's the sound I want.")

Amps/Preamps: Fender Princeton Chorus, L.R. Baggs preamp, Tech 21 SansAmp Acoustic DI.

Effects: Way Huge Red Llama Overdrive.

Strings: D'Addario EJ16s .012 - .053 (Taylor), John Pearse 3000s (Sheehorn), La Bella 730L (Deering).

Picks & Things: Dunlop banjo picks, Shubb/Pearse SP3 bluegrass slide.

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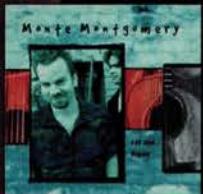
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Gerardo Nunez

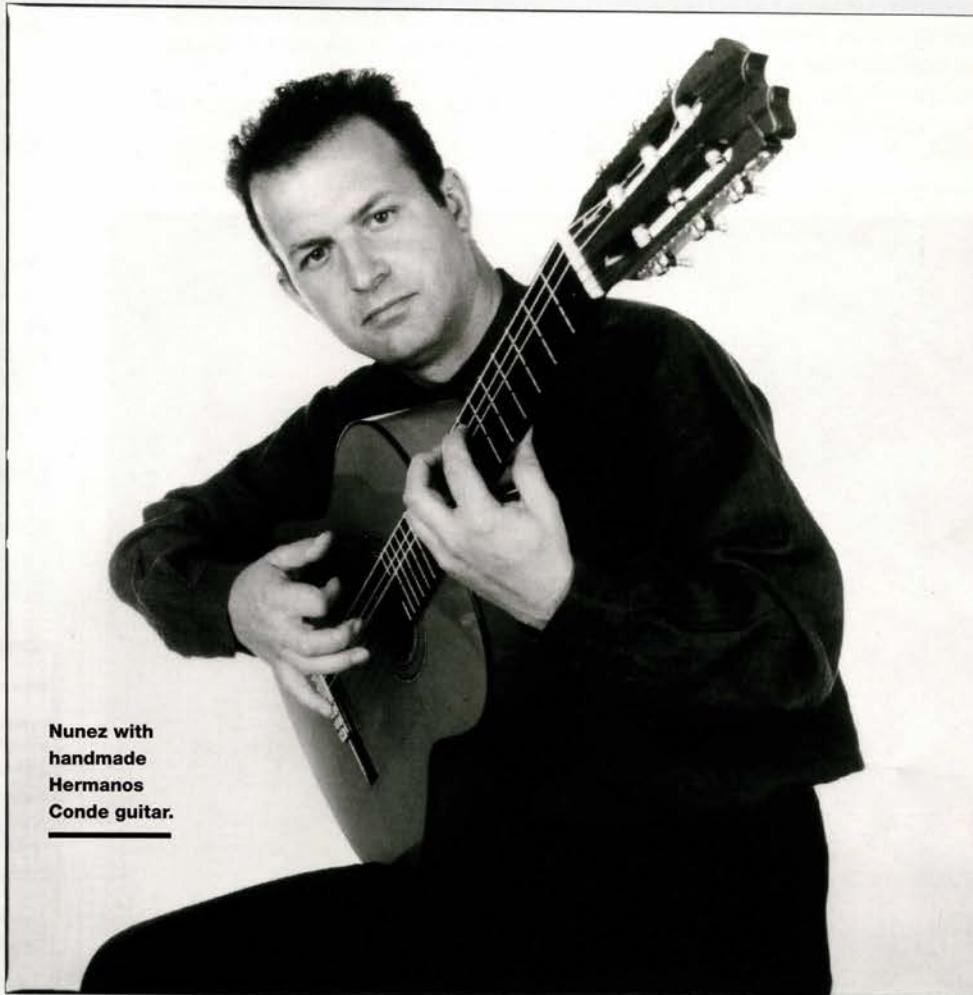
Flamenco's Maverick Virtuoso

By Lance Quinn

Pure flamenco has never been widespread, but it is the fountain—the basis for all flamenco—and it's always vigilant," says Gerardo Nunez. But Nunez, who at 37 is considered one of the best flamenco guitarists of his generation, is far from a traditionalist. He incorporates jazz, Arabic, and South American flavors into his song forms, employs alternate tunings, and often composes in keys not typically associated with flamenco music (such as A_{\flat} and E_{\flat}). Nunez's beautiful, impassioned compositions—as well as his clean, lightning-fast technique—are showcased on *Salome* [Art-Danza], a dance score Nunez wrote and recorded for Madrid's Carmen Cortez Dance Company.

"I know dance very well, as I have played for flamenco dancers and singers since I was very young," says Nunez. "When you play solo, you are thinking only about the composition. But when you play for a dancer, the rhythm is the most important thing. You must be very familiar with the song and the dance. And you must remember that the guitar is taking a supportive role—it must never overshadow the singer or push the dancer."

Nunez with
handmade
Hermanos
Conde guitar.



Most of *Salome*'s tracks were recorded live with guitar, bass, and percussion (palmas and cajon), although string arrangements were added later. But unlike "pure" flamenco recordings, there was a lot of guitar overdubbing, as the soundtrack required difficult octave passages, rapid picado harmonies, and multi-guitar rascueos. In addition, Nunez used Pro Tools to lengthen (or shorten) passages to accommodate the choreography.

Nunez was born in Jerez de la Frontera—a flamenco center

in Andalucia—and began studying the guitar at age 12. "Where I come from, it's very common for a father to give his son a flamenco guitar," he says. "I studied the old guitarists, such as Nino Ricardo, Sabicas, and Ramon Montoya, and then, in my lifetime, Paco de Lucia and Manolo Sanlucar erupted."

Nunez plays a Hermanos Conde, which is handmade in Madrid with a spruce top and cypress back and sides. The Conde is much lighter than a classical guitar, has lower action,

and according to Nunez, sounds "pleasant and warm and flamenco all at the same time." He uses Labella medium-tension strings, and typically records his Conde with four microphones: a Neumann U87 placed near the soundhole, a U87 set about ten inches from the neck, a U87 positioned over his right shoulder, and an AKG C414 placed about four feet in front of the guitar.

While his virtuosic technique is honed by assiduous practice, Nunez is unusual in that he uses three fingers (index, middle,

GERARDO NUNEZ

and ring) rather than two (index and middle) when playing picado, and also employs his thumb for large string skips. Nunez also shares his falsetas (melodic passages) and technical knowledge at an annual, week-long guitar class for intermediate and advanced players that he teaches in Sanlucar de Barrameda, Spain.

"You must see live flamenco," he says. "It is very different from recordings because it is an expression of *art*. Recordings begin and end in a set time. But for live performances, the guitarist often stretches out and plays longer because the singer can start at any time. It's a *living* music."

A BASIC FLAMENCO GLOSSARY

Alzapua. A three-stroke picking technique.

Apoyando. Typically played by striking a string with the right-hand index, middle, or ring finger, which then comes to rest on the next *lower*-pitched string. If the apoyando is played with the thumb, the thumb rests on the next *higher*-pitched string. A rest stroke.

Compas. The basic rhythm. It's a cardinal

sin for a guitarist to play *sin compas*—without time.

Colpe. Tapping the face of the guitar next to the first string—usually with the right ring finger and fingernail—to accent beats or fill in silences between notes.

Parado. Muting ringing strings by damping with the left hand fourth finger.

Picado. Single notes played apoyando with alternating index and middle fingers.

Rasgueos. The characteristic flamenco strum, which is typically rolled to produce a drum-like effect. There are many variations of rasgueos.

Tirando. A free stroke with either the index, middle, or ring finger where—after striking a note—the finger does *not* come to rest on a higher or lower string.

Toque. Traditional flamenco song forms that include tangos, bulerias, rumbas, and soleares.

Tremolo. A technique where the thumb plays the melody and the fingers play a counter-melody in a continuous, rolling fashion. A typical tremolo—five notes played within the space of a quarter note—is performed with the thumb leading, followed by a fingerpicking pattern of index, ring, middle, index. —LQ

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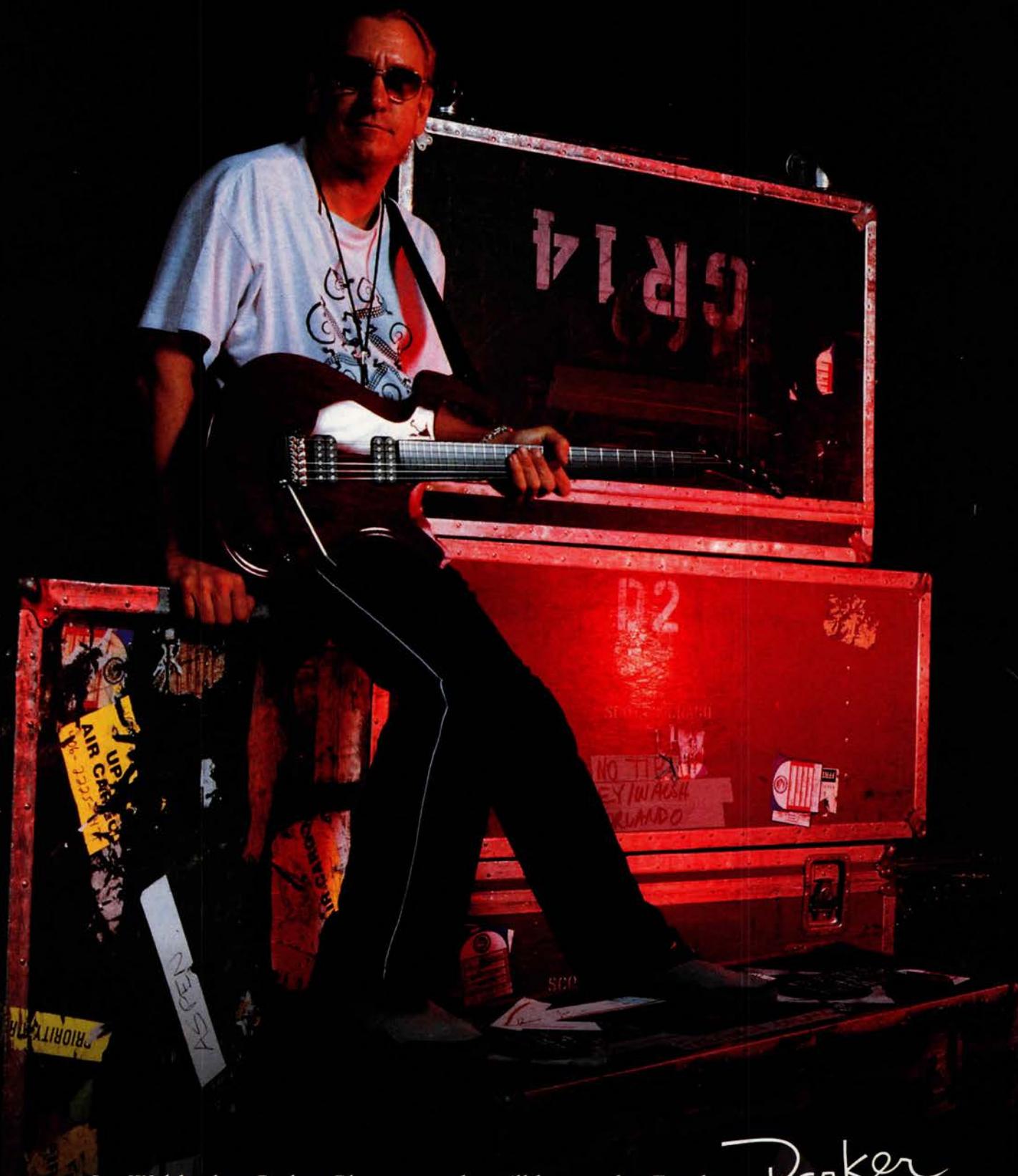
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Royce Campbell

Romancing the Tone

By Adam Levy

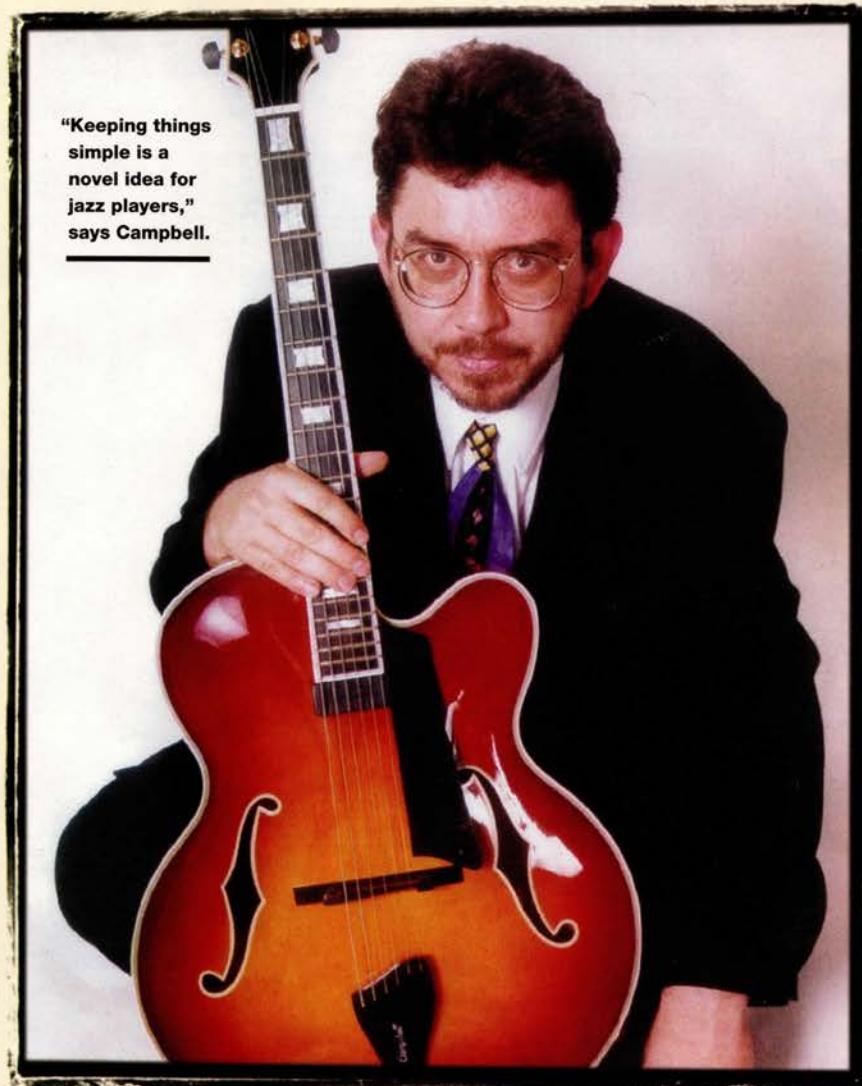
At 47, Royce Campbell hardly qualifies as one of jazz guitar's elder statesmen, but Campbell *does* embody many of the old guard's best values: romantic melodicism, versatility, and a full-flavored tone that comes from the hands (rather than pedals or boutique amps). He learned some of these values from his uncle, Carroll DeKamp—a professional pianist, guitarist, and arranger who wrote charts for the Stan Kenton band, played with Wes Montgomery in the late '50s, and is still arranging professionally. But for the most part, Campbell learned on the job. His tenure as composer Henry Mancini's touring guitarist from 1975-'94 was a particularly educational period.

"Playing with Henry taught me how powerful a simple, melodic composition can be," Campbell relates. "His tunes are uncomplicated, yet so full of emotional content. I keep him in mind when I'm writing, or even when I'm soloing—like, 'Hey, don't be afraid to keep things simple and beautiful.' That's a novel idea for jazz players."

Since Mancini's passing, Campbell—whose latest release is *Royce Campbell with Strings* [Chase Music Group]—has focused on his jazz career. His *6x6* [Evidence] finds him rubbing elbows—and arpeggios—with John Abercrombie, Pat Martino, Bucky Pizzarelli, Dave Stryker, and Larry Coryell. And *Project G-5—A Tribute to Wes Montgomery* [Evidence] boasts a similarly impressive roster: Herb Ellis, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Raney, and Cal Collins.

The idea of playing with such top dogs was twofold: First, it stretched Campbell to play in a variety of styles. (Mixing it up with Abercrombie, for instance, requires different skills than those needed to jam with Bucky Pizzarelli or Tal Farlow.) And second, the projects have endeared Campbell to jazz-guitar fans, who are more willing to buy a disc by someone unfamiliar if it features players they know and love.

"Keeping things simple is a novel idea for jazz players," says Campbell.



And *6x6* shows that, even alongside such heavies such as Martino, Campbell can hold his own. His swinging, in-the-pocket lines are evocative of the early work of Wes Montgomery, his professed main man. While he embellishes Montgomery's classic recipe with his own bluer-than-Wes tinges and an extra measure of romanticism, Campbell admits that his early style mirrored Montgomery's a little *too* closely.

"I had to consciously strive to find my own thing," he says, "or I'd have been completely swallowed up by Wes' tone and phrasing. Not

to mention that it's nearly impossible, on a technical level, to do the things he did. I mean, anyone can play with their thumb, but Wes was using upstrokes *and* downstrokes."

Campbell does use his thumb on ballads for an ultra-smooth tone, but his lines are primarily plectrum driven. He swears by Dunlop 2.0 mm picks, reasoning, "with a heavier pick, you have more control of the tone and articulation." However, he wields his thick-as-a-brick picks with a feather-light touch.

"Many younger players make the mistake
continued on page 45

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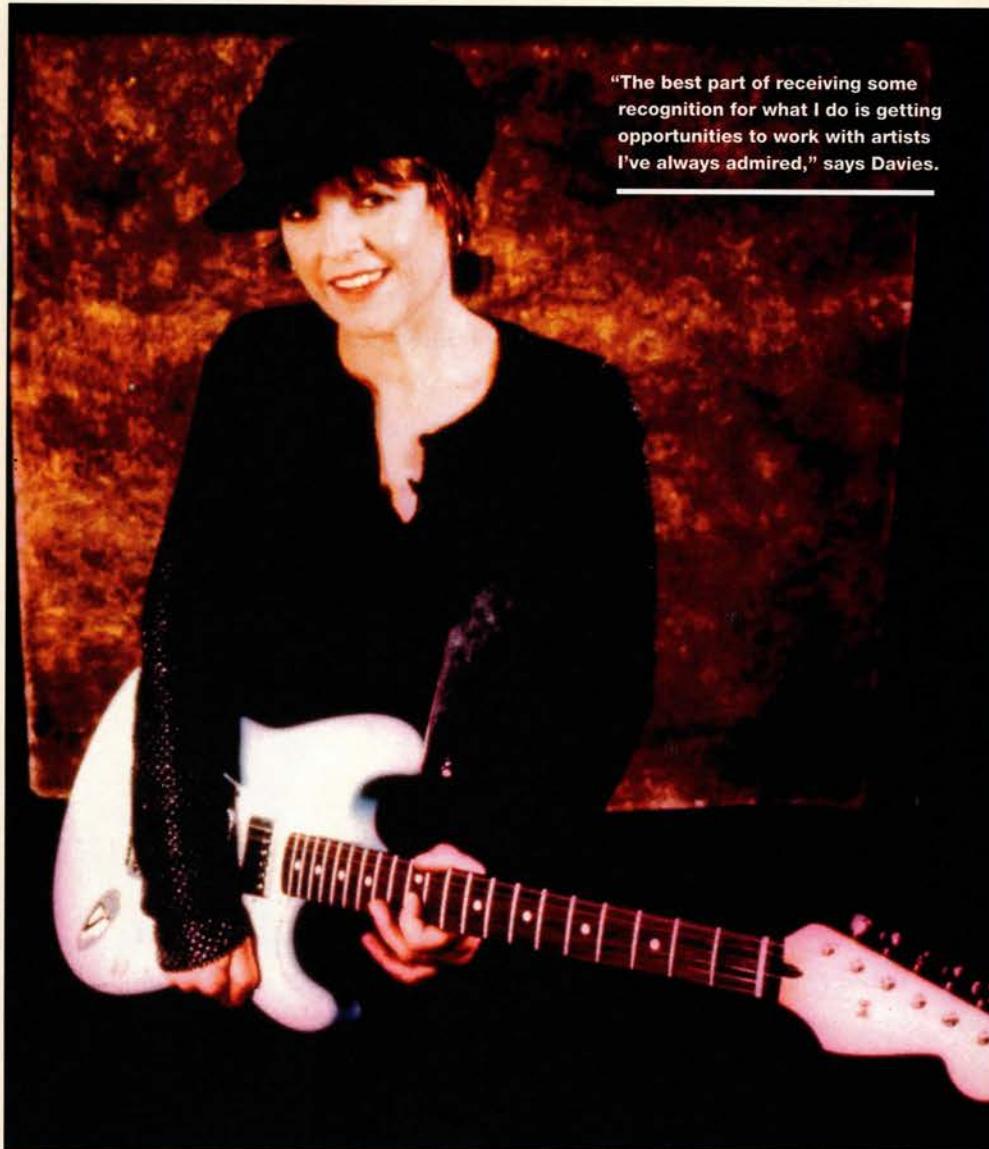
Going for the Vibe with Double Trouble

By Lisa Sharden

I'm at a point in my career where I'm not one of the kids anymore, but I'm too young to be any kind of legend," says Debbie Davies, recipient of the 1997 W.C. Handy Award for Contemporary Blues Female Artist of the Year. "And that's really a hard place to be, because it's a maintenance point where you just keep writing and trying to grow musically."

Growing up on the West Coast, Davies' first major gig came in '85 when she joined Maggie Mayall and the Cadillacs, an all-female R&B group led by the wife of blues legend John Mayall. In '88, Davies was plucked away by Albert Collins, and toured with his Icebreakers for four years before leaving to play with harmonica player Fingers Taylor and to pursue her own ventures.

Davies' first solo album, 1993's *Picture This*, included a guest appearance by Collins, who died of cancer later that year. She credits Collins with helping her make the transition from sideman to bandleader. "Playing all night long as a frontperson forces you to dig in and create your own style," Davies explains. "That was my biggest evolution



"The best part of receiving some recognition for what I do is getting opportunities to work with artists I've always admired," says Davies.

as a musician, and I picked that up from watching Albert."

On her latest album, *Tales from the Austin Motel* (Shanachie), Davies is joined by drummer Chris Layton and bassist Tommy Shannon—aka Double Trouble—the duo who backed Stevie Ray Vaughan. They first played together at a tribute concert for Vaughan at the House of Blues in Cambridge, Massachusetts,

and Davies hoped she might have the opportunity to work with them again.

"That fantasy came to fruition with this album," she relates. "We recorded the tracks in Austin, and I definitely used the Austin vibe—and my memories of Stevie—as inspiration. But I wasn't trying to emulate Stevie's sound or style, I was playing things my way. After all, I've

worked in Texas a great deal, and I attribute my style to all of those Texas blues players, including Stevie Ray and Jimmie Vaughan, Anson Funderburgh, T. Bone Walker, and Clarence Gatemouth Brown."

Davies wanted a live, edgy sound for *Tales*, and she knew that Layton and Shannon would put down the right feel. "I made demos of the songs and sent

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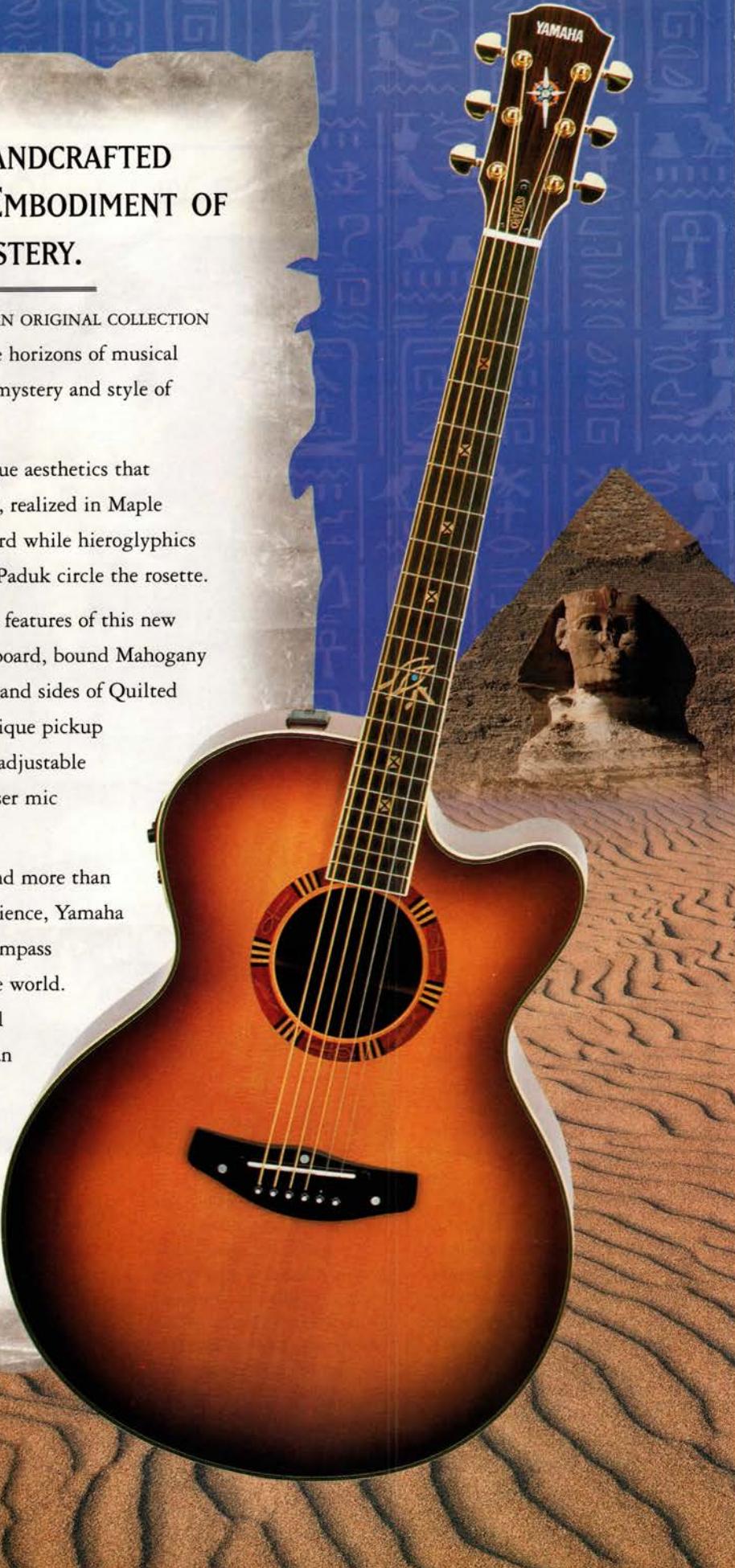
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DEBBIE DAVIES

them to the guys to use as a road map," she explains. "Then we got together in the studio, worked up the tunes, and cut them right there. We did all of the rhythm tracks live, then I overdubbed my solos and vocals."

The *Tales* sessions were more than just easy, loose, and on the money, however. Playing with a great rhythm section that was burning with vibe and history was tremendously inspirational. "This project was a real boost for me," says Davies. "The blues market can be a really tough nut to crack, and it's certainly not the most lucrative end of the music business. To be a blues musician, the love really has to be there."

ROYCE CAMPBELL

continued from page 41

of striking the strings too hard," he says. "And that actually kills a lot of the sound. You just need to set the string in motion to get the full value of the tone, and let the acoustics of the guitar and the power of the amp do the rest."

To keep his chops in tip-top shape, Campbell does most of his practicing on an Ovation steel-string. "It's much harder to play than my arch-top," he explains. "When I can get my technique

continued on page 50

CAMPBELL'S TONE SOUP

For straight-ahead jazz, Campbell's companion is a custom Benedetto archtop with a neck profile contoured to match his favorite old Gibson L-5. He keeps his Benedetto outfitted with Thomastik-Infeld Jazz BeBop Medium Light strings, gauged .013-.053. A Polytone Mini Brute II completes the equation.

On other types of gigs—such as contemporary jazz and R&B dates—he plays a Gibson ES-335 strung slightly lighter (.011-.049), to give his rhythm parts more spank-and-chank and for easier bending. The 335 is usually coupled with a Roland JC-120 amp. A tone purist, Campbell generally shuns the use of effects, but he'll kick in the JC-120's stereo chorus now and then for a little sonic variety.

With Henry Mancini, Campbell first used a Gibson L-5, then switched to an ES-335 so he could better cover some of Mancini's more rockin' charts. Campbell eventually settled on a Strat, which his boss preferred because of its ability to project through 50-piece orchestras. —AL

DEBBIE'S BLUES TOOLS

Guitars: Fender Custom Shop Strat (with '50s Gibson P-90 pickup in the bridge position), Fender Tex-Mex Strat (with '60s Gibson P-90 pickup in the bridge position and a hum-bucker in the neck position), custom DeCava hollowbody.

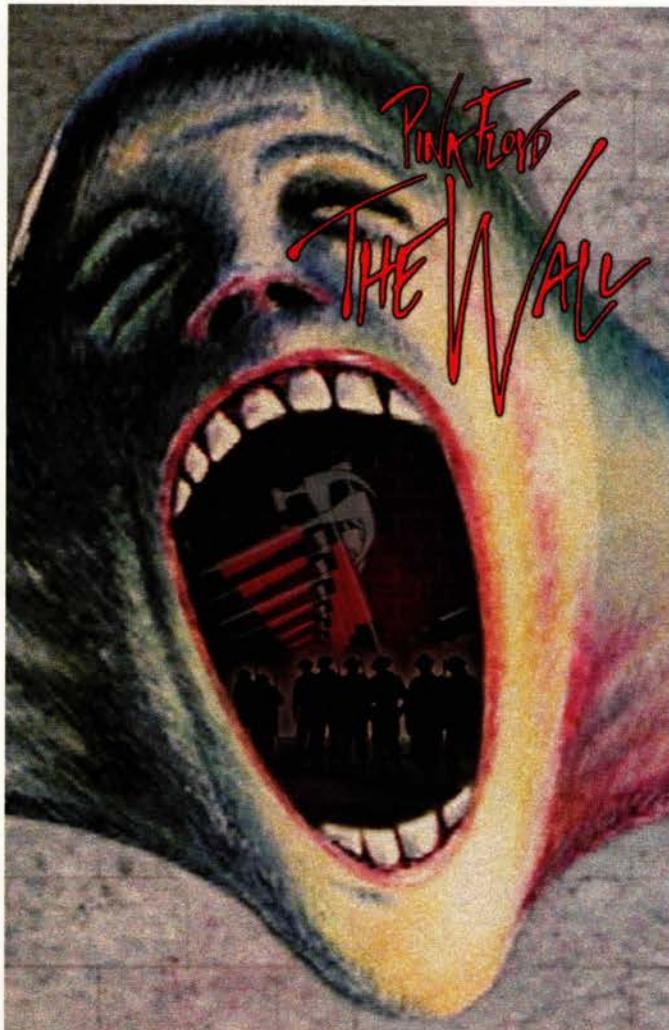
Amps: Fender Bassman Reissue, Victoria 45410T.

Effects: Fender stand-alone reverb unit, Ibanez Tube Screamer, Klon Centaur, Vox wah pedal.

Strings: Dean Markley Blue Steel (gauged .010-.046).

Picks: Gibson teardrop (heavy).

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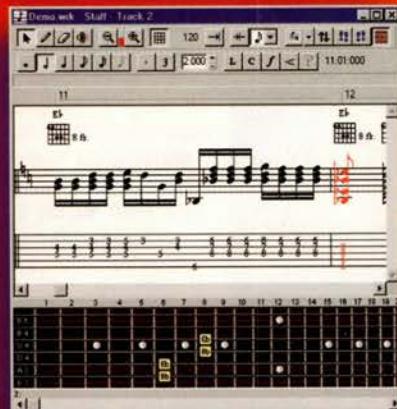
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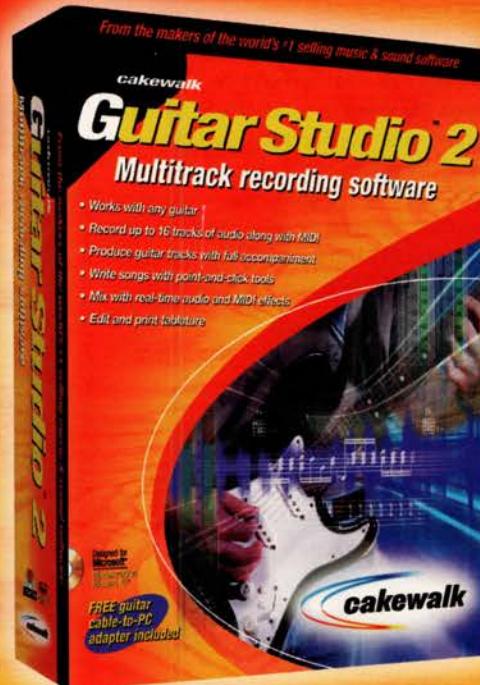


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Ear Candy

L7

Our basic trip is distortion," says L7 guitarist Donita Sparks, "but we always feel free to throw in something fresh, strange, or goofy." On *Slap-Happy* [Wax Tadpole/Bong Load], the inaugural release from L7's own label (after stints with indies and majors), Sparks and co-guitarist Suzi Gardner mingle bleeps, bleeps, quacks, and other noises with a fuzz palette that ranges from big and ballsy to thin and spitty. Depending on the song, the duo's distorted tones can sweep from '70s glam to '90s grunge to a "Black Sabbath

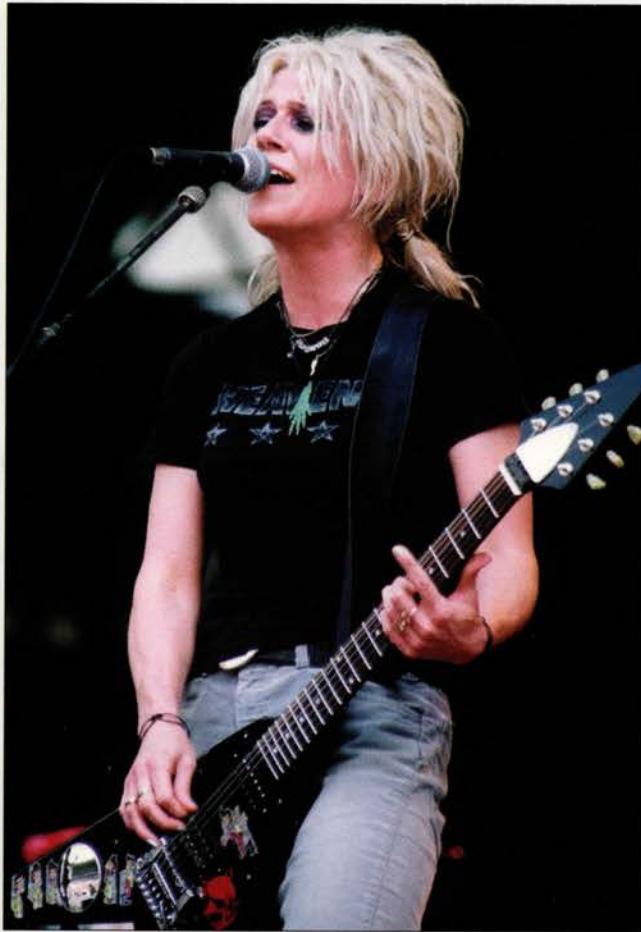
meets Hole" hybrid. But whatever the fuzz flavor might be, it's not the result of a pedal plugged into a cranked amp.

"A distortion pedal through a Marshall sounds like crap," says Sparks. "The tone is always real scratchy—not beefy at all. It's like the distortion of the Marshall cancels out the pedal. It's best to run fuzz pedals through a Fender and keep the amp's tone clean."

Sparks plugs an Epiphone Flying V or MDX Custom Flying V ("I've always played Flying Vs—they look hilarious and sound right for our music") into a '65 50-watt Fender Bassman



"Many of the players down there came from the Western swing tradition, where a guitarist would only get a short lead break," says expatriate Texan Jackie King, explaining the "Texas touch." "And as they only got one shot to get it right, they tended to play in the pocket."



"I love players like Dick Dale and Link Wray," says L7's Donita Sparks, "so I tend to play leads you can sing in your head. I like melodic ditties."

head and Hiwatt 4x12 cabinet. Although she uses a Maestro Fuzz and other vintage stompboxes in the studio, Sparks opts for Boss HM-3 Hyper Metal, FZ-3 Fuzz, and GE-7 Graphic EQ pedals on the road.

"We're not the best players in the world," she admits, "but we go for the soul—it's all about the songs and spirit, rather than technical expertise. I mean, a lot of talented guitarists just don't rock me. And while I respect players who can play, there's something to be said for bands like us who rock as a unit. There

may not be an amazing player in the lineup, but the band is a contender." —MICHAEL MOLENA

Jackie King

Jackie King's style can be described as "Tex-Wes"—a convergence of jazz melodicism and the fat-yet-bright tone associated with Lone Star bluesmen. And on his latest disc, *Moon Magic* [Indigo Moon], the San Antonio native (who now resides in the San Francisco area) bases his surprising melodic passages on a novel harmonic

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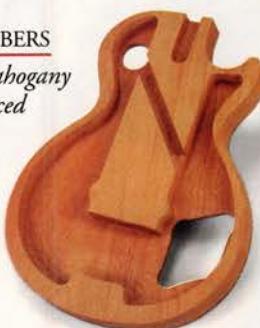
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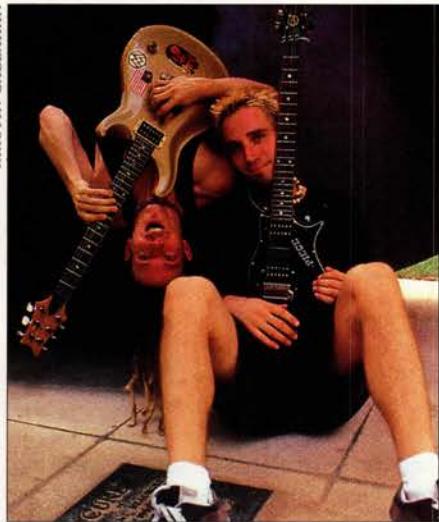
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"I always keep my mids at 5, highs at 6, and bass all the way up," says Jimi HaHa (upside down) of Jimmie's Chicken Shack. "I crank the bass just because it sounds fun."

approach—the "Triune" system.

"It takes the three basic elements of harmony—major, minor, and dominant—and shows their cross-relationships and how they can be used interchangeably," explains King. "For example, when improvising over a G7 chord, you can focus on the dominant G tonality, and you can also draw melodies from the tonalities of F major and D minor. It works because there are plenty of common tones between the three tonal centers, but each tonality emphasizes notes that have a slightly different effect."

While his approach to soloing is somewhat unique, King's gear choices are fairly conventional jazz tools: a 1975 Gibson Byrdland and 4x10 Fender Blues DeVille. "Ever since I first started playing," he says, "I've loved the classic Gibson guitar and Fender amp combination."

All the tunes on *Moon Magic* feature "moon" in the title ("Moon River," "Fly Me to the Moon," and so on). Originally, the lunar concept was simply to create a unified theme for the record, but as King began compiling tunes, he realized that scores of guitarists have been stricken with moon fever.

"It just so happens that a lot of standards with 'moon' in the title have been big, influential jazz guitar records," he says. "Records such as Johnny Smith's 'Moonlight in Vermont' and Wes Montgomery's 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon' made a big impact on me, so recording them was like going into sacred territory. The trick was to make each song a personal statement, rather than trying to out-Wes Wes, or replicate what he did."

King also included his take on Les Paul's "How High the Moon." "When I was a kid," King recalls, "I didn't realize that Les had recorded

that tune at different tape speeds, and that he never actually played all that fast stuff in real time." King met Paul years later, and when the elder guitarist broke the news to King that the track was more a product of his studio wizardry than his fretboard prowess, it was too late—King had already learned all of Paul's licks note-for-note. "I chalked that up to a growing experience," he says.

—ADAM LEVY

Sipple for the band's hook-driven interplay. The group's almost psychic approach to songcraft was demonstrated during the recording of its recent CD, *Bring Your Own Stereo* [Island/Rocket].

"I walked into the house where we were rehearsing and Jimi was upstairs doing this Lydian thing," remembers Double D. "I set up my guitar and was playing these crazy tremolo and whammy sounds when Jimi came running down yelling, 'Don't stop!' We started playing the parts we were messing with together, and just looked at each other and said, 'Yeah! This is working!' That's how we wrote 'Face It.'"

The creative synergy between the guitarists is intensified by the fact that Double D's rock chops complement HaHa's reggae stylings. "Jimi

Jimmie's Chicken Shack

Although guitarist Jimi HaHa handles most of the songwriting for Jimmie's Chicken Shack, he counts on co-guitarist Double D, bassist Lemon, and drummer

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has a crunchy, grindy sound, but it's not in his character to come across as a rocker or metal-head," says Double D. "He always plays on the upbeat, so I try to play right on the *one*. Then his up parts feel even more 'up.'"

"And our drummer always hears the downbeat in a different place than I do," adds HaHa, "so that *really* makes my parts seem more reggae or ska oriented."

HaHa and Double D play PRS EGs and semi-hollowbody McCarty's strung with D'Addario .011s. (Double D also owns a Gibson Les Paul.) HaHa plugs into a 100-watt Soldano Decatone, and Double D uses a Soldano 50-watt Hot Rod 50+. Both heads go through 4x12 Soldano cabinets. In the studio, HaHa plays acoustic parts with his mom's Yamaha FG-75.

While HaHa limits his effects to a Boss PH-2 Super Phaser and DD-3 Digital Delay, Double D is constantly looking for weird sounds. When his pedalboard was stolen after a gig, he found the Boss GT-5 floor unit to be an amazing replacement. The multi-effector has already inspired more than its share of licks—such as the drag-racing slide sound on the song "Ooh."

"I fade in a low-octave effect to get that breathy kind of 'hhho' underneath everything," Double D explains. "On the record, I pulled the

slide past the nut to get a little bit of a clang going on, too. I always do everything I can to exaggerate the point—to turn a part into a real cool gimmick or gag."

—KYLE SWENSON

ROYCE CAMPBELL

continued from page 45

to feel solid on the Ovation, the Benedetto is a breeze. It's like baseball players who warm up with two bats so that when they're at home plate swinging just one, it feels nice and easy."

Campbell offers two more points of advice to budding jazzers. First, he says, focus on repertoire, not just technique. "I've had people come to me for lessons who knew their scales and chord voicings all up and down the neck, but couldn't play a single tune all the way through from beginning to end," he says. "What do you think you're going to actually use on a gig, scales or tunes?"

He also advises players to cultivate versatility. "Because of the sheer range of Mancini's compositions, I was playing jazz, marches, rock, and classical-type things," explains Campbell. "But to be a professional player, you must have that level of flexibility on tap. Very few guys can be specialists. If you *do* decide to do one thing, you'd better do it awfully damn well."

VOX

Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse kicks back with his Top Boost AC30.

Photo by Danny Clinch

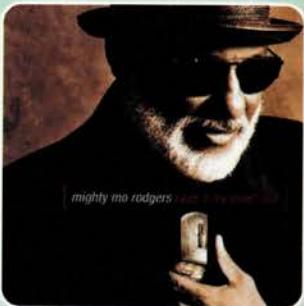
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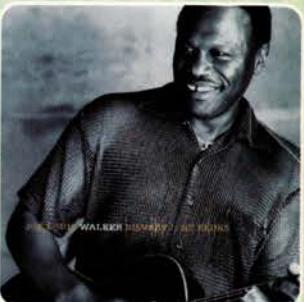
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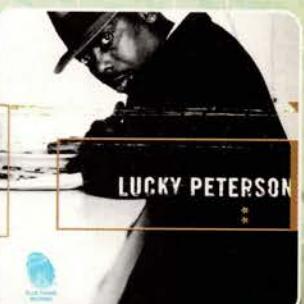
MIGHTY MO RODGERS *Blues Is My Wailin' Wall*

Billboard magazine's Chris Morris raves about Mighty Mo Rodgers and his Blue Thumb debut, *Blues Is My Wailin' Wall*: "True blues originals are hard to come by... get prepared to be flat-out blown away by his striking conceptions. A revelation."



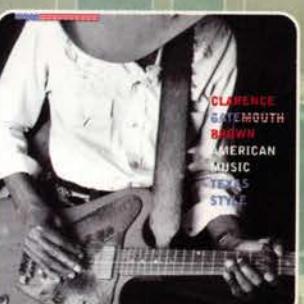
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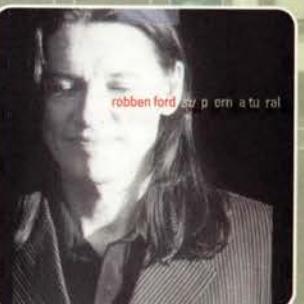
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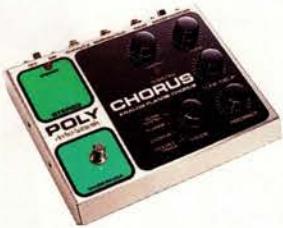
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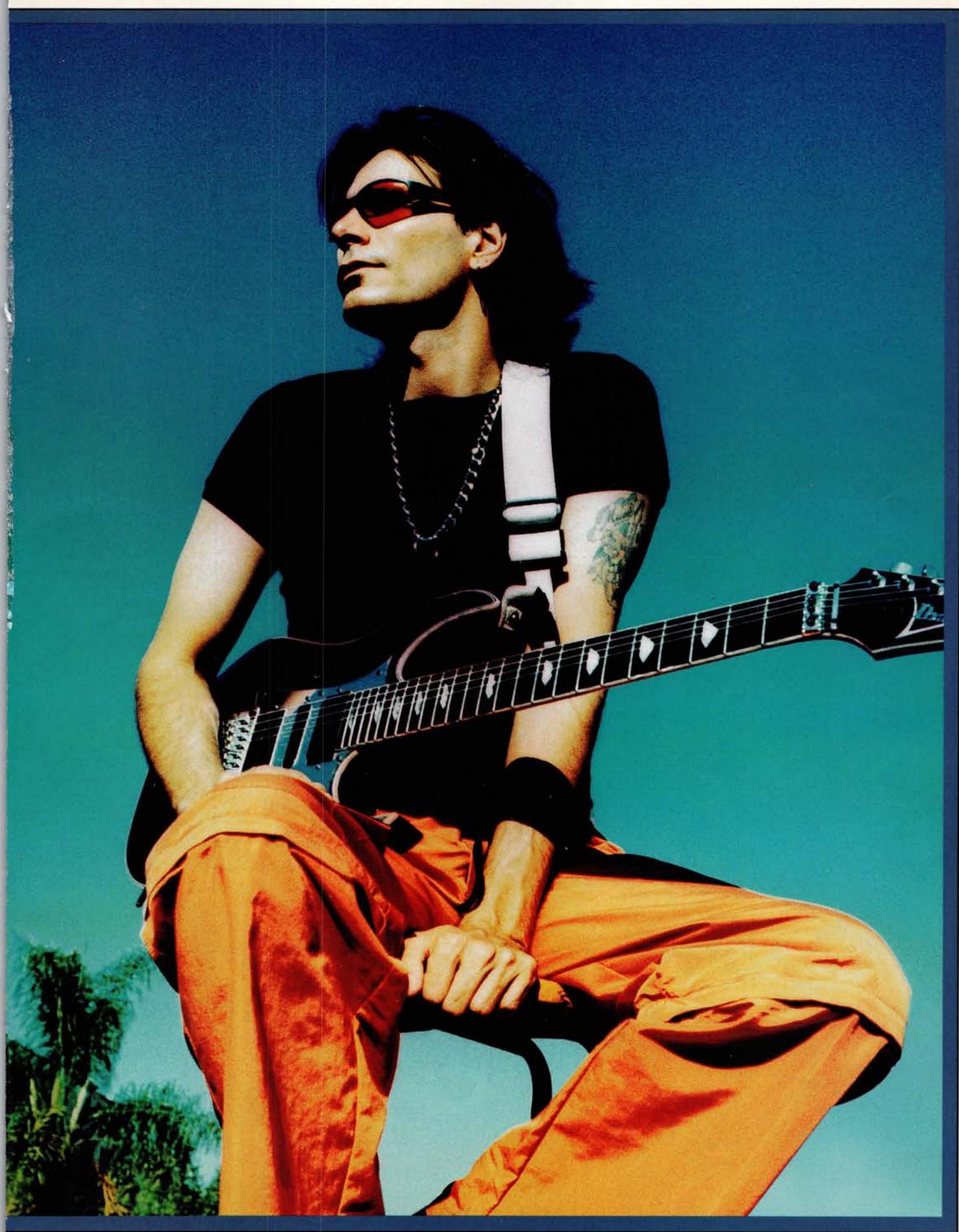


Steve Vai is not intimidated easily. This, after all, is the guy who astounded Frank Zappa at the ripe old age of 18, followed Yngwie Malmsteen in Alcatraz, and was the first guitarist to play with David Lee Roth after Eddie Van Halen. He also

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raised the bar for instrumental rock to dizzying heights, and single-handedly established the 7-string guitar as a viable (pun intended) rock instrument. And for all this, many players deride him as a poster boy for '80s shred excess.

Does Vai overplay? Sure. But busting Steve Vai for playing too much is like faulting Mark McGwire for hitting too many home runs. People who dismiss Vai as a billion-note shred-head are definitely missing the point. Closer scrutiny reveals a master of the instrument with a vast knowledge of theory, and unparalleled arranging and transcribing chops.

Vai's latest release, *The Ultra Zone* [Epic], is as full of contradictions as the man himself: emotional and gutsy, yet polished and carefully orchestrated; funny and wacky, but at the same time serious and brooding.

The Vai Zone

Vai has been known to take some pretty extreme measures to prepare for an album. To gear up for one track on his classic *Passion and Warfare*, he didn't eat for four days and cut the part with blood clots under his fingertips. To get into the zone for *The Ultra Zone*, Vai created a loop of the backing tracks for the song "Windows to the Soul" and played over it 15 hours a day for three days.

"It all starts in the mind," he says. "I wanted to see if I could bring my mind into certain emotional states. I would focus on an emotion—like tenderness—and try to touch the instrument as softly as I could and still get the notes out. If you can stay focused, it gets easier to feel what you're trying to express. That's how I coined the phrase the 'Ultra Zone.' It's a frame of mind where there are no distractions."

However, the path to *The Ultra Zone* was rife with distractions. "I started working on this album during the *Fire Garden* tour," he explains. "Around that time, I also put together



"I HAVE NO DESIRE

TO COLLECT VINTAGE GUITARS.
I BOUGHT A VINTAGE
STRAT ONCE AND IT GOT STOLEN
WITHIN A WEEK."

the *Merry Axemas* records; did the G3 tour, record, and video; put out *Flex-able Leftovers*; and compiled a 10-CD box set. And while I was chipping away at *The Ultra Zone*, my father passed away. All these things shaped this album. I tried to bring everything together in some kind of cohesive fashion, but the material was all over the place. In a way, my whole life

The Seeker

was the preparation for this album."

Most of *The Ultra Zone* was recorded to analog tape on Vai's Studer 827 and 800 model 24-track decks. Some songs (such as "The Blood and

Tears") were tracked in his backyard studio which boasts a Neve board and an analog 3M multitrack.

"I always record to analog tape," he says. "I don't like what digital does to the sound. It sterilizes it. The lows are a little too tight, and the upper end can be harsh. It's not necessarily something you hear right away, but you can feel it. Digital just feels impersonal to me."

However, many of the album's sonic twists and turns suggest a few spins inside a digital-audio workstation. "There is a lot of editing," Vai admits, "because I get carried away and have to edit stuff out. But most of the edits were razor cuts on analog tape. Only if I needed to do something that *couldn't* be done in the analog world did I use a hard-disk system."

"TO HEAR SOMETHING IN YOUR HEAD, YOU'VE GOT TO SHUT UP FIRST."



Creative Schisms

Much of Vai's magic comes from his ingenious juxtaposition of disparate elements and emotions. "I prefer to start from the emotional side of things, rather than the mechanical," he says. "That's why I don't really come up with melodies by noodling. It's possible to write great melodies that way, but I'd rather hear it in my head first. But when we create, we tend to go to parts of our psyche that we're attracted to. For some people, that means politics or race cars or whatever. I'm sort of a seeker. I'm always questing for spiritual balance. On the other hand, I've got this intense technical ability, and my brain always seems to marry the two together."

Vai's duality extends beyond technique and spirituality to also embrace the serious and the comical. "I'm serious about my music, but all of my records have at least one element of cornball to them," he says. "The song 'Lucky Charms' on the new album is as corny as it gets. With those munchkin voices, it's the Wizard of Oz all over again. I wanted to write a funny little song for my kids, but it just so happened that the tune had all these odd meters and grooves. To me, it doesn't seem like a contradiction to have all those elements in the same song."

Learning Curves

From the xeroxed guitar lessons he used to mail from his house, to his out-of-this-world *GP* column, "Martian Love Secrets," Vai has always



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PEAVEY

The Seeker

approached teaching enthusiastically, but he also remains an avid student of the guitar. Not surprisingly, he has very definite ideas on what it takes to excel at both pursuits.

"The most important thing a teacher needs is a respect for the student," he says. "Teachers also need to assess the goals and desires of their students and help them achieve them. As far as being a good student, first and foremost you need to have a love for the instrument. Once you've got that, you need to pick a goal and slowly and methodically work toward it. If that goal is to play a Limp Bizkit song, great. Find an instructor to help you learn that. If, on the other hand, your goal is to be a devastating, virtuoso guitarist, then you have a different set of priorities. But the way you achieve them is the same: through love and respect for your instrument."

Vai on the '80s

Few guitarists are better qualified to expound on rock guitar's most despised decade than Vai. His flamboyant, high-profile gigs with Roth and Whitesnake inspired thousands of would-be shredders, who in turn incited the backlash that gave

Vai Talks Tech

"I'm still bringing Ibanez guitars on the road because there's nothing else I'd consider playing," says Vai. "I'll bring a 7-string, a few JEM 6-strings, a great Strat-style guitar Ibanez made for me, and that ridiculous-looking, heart-shaped, triple-neck guitar that I play on 'Fever Dream.' I plug my guitar into a Morley Bad Horsie wah, then into a Boss DS-1 Distortion—that's the fattest distortion box for my taste. From there I go into a volume pedal, then a DigiTech Whammy pedal, then into a Carvin Legacy amp. I connect my rack—which contains an Eventide H3000 Ultra-Harmonizer, two Roland SDE-3000s, and t.c. electronic G-Force and Fireworx units—to the Legacy's effects send, and run the rack output into another Legacy to get a stereo sound. I have another Legacy set up for the third neck of the heart guitar. I also have a little D.I. rig for my Carvin acoustic-electric, a custom Taylor, and maybe a sitar. Finally, I'll have a separate rig set up for guests. For this album's tour, I want to pull people out of the audience to jam. And I never know if there's some Rocky Balboa-type out there who will get up and kick my ass!"

rise to bands such as Nirvana and Soundgarden.

"Every genre has its pros and cons," he maintains. "In the '80s, I think there was good music and there was hack music—just like there is now. I'm thrilled that I got to participate in those extravaganzas, though, because they were great. With David Lee Roth, I got to play my ass off every night to 20,000 people, and I'm never going to complain about that.

"People love to get down on chops in the '80s, but that's how I always wanted my playing to be—fast, accurate, and dazzling. I still love

to see my fingers flying all over the neck. It's really cool. Being an accomplished guitar player has *unbelievable* rewards. It's an honor, it's a pleasure, and it's a liberation. I'm not about to stop doing it because the world doesn't think it's cool right now, so I feel very fortunate for the support I do get from my fans. I'd never say that what I do is better than what someone else does, but I am capable of doing a couple of unique things and, thankfully, my fans still like it. I don't plan on changing the world. But trust me—I wake up every morning grateful for my niche!" ■

Re-Vai-talizing the Common Scale

The good news is, Steve Vai is human. He makes mistakes. The bad news is, he makes cooler, funkier mistakes than

most mere mortals. And when he gets warmed up and nails a part, he's as breathtakingly awesome as you've always feared.

Busting out licks on an acoustic-electric, Vai's mission was to take something commonplace—in this case the lowly

Ex. 1

$\text{♩} = 56-112$

Ex. 2

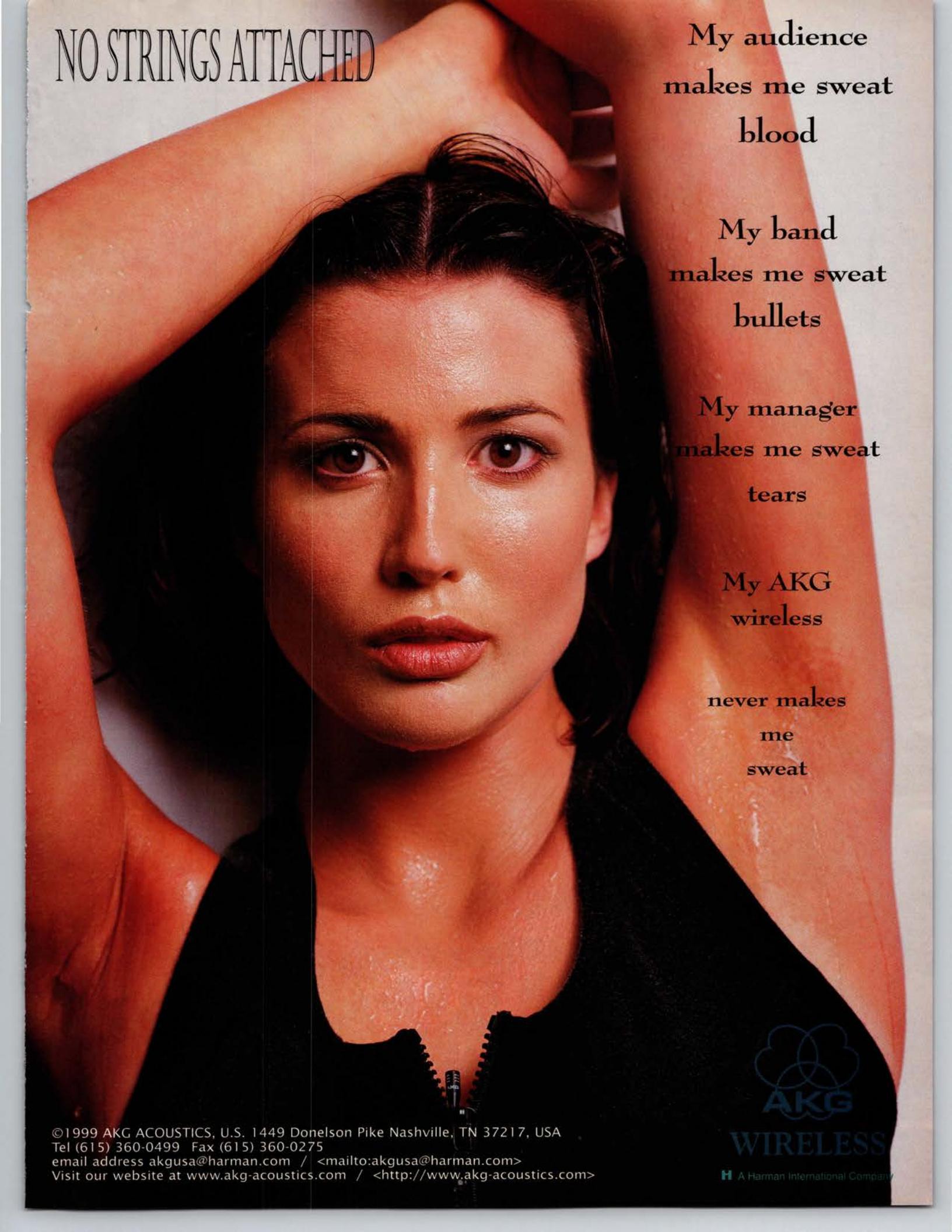
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Am pentatonic scale—and make it uncommon. "To avoid creative ruts and clichéd licks, you've got to force yourself to not run scales straight up and down," he says. "So what I'll do is take two non-adjacent strings and only play on those for a while. If I do that long enough, I'll come up with something like this." (Ex. 1—The staccato open *A* on the first beat of each measure is the only note not played on the *G* and *E* strings.)

Exploring further, Vai morphs the *Am* pentatonic scale into the *A* Dorian mode by adding the major 6 (*F#*) and his beloved major 9 (*B*) to the fray in Ex. 2. Both examples are notated as played, and the phrasing in Ex. 2 gets pretty far out. But once you delve into the concept of avoiding straight up and down runs, you'll see that it doesn't matter how you phrase the notes. You *will* sound badass and original.

—MB



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blood

My band
makes me sweat
bullets

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makes me sweat
tears

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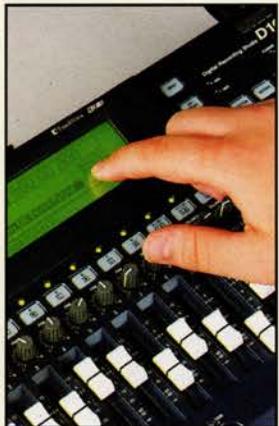
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THE DAWN OF THE DESKTOP GUITARIST

BY JOE GORE

'D HEARD HE WAS A GREAT

guitarist, but the first time I
watched Jason

Carmer work in
the studio his per-
formance was
unimpressive—no
discernable hooks,
sloppy rhythm, and little
concern for chord changes.

"Maybe he'll warm up
after a few takes," I
thought. But after
that first chaot-
ic pass, he
set aside the guitar,
turned to the computer, and started
editing the track he'd just laid down.

First, he isolated one eccentric stab,
time-stretched it to a bar in length, and
synched it to the drums to create a pow-
erful downbeat accent with an eerie
afterglow. Next, he found some
string noise, boosted the volume, duplicat-
ed the audio snippet, and pasted the pieces
together to construct a flickering rhythm
that locked with the hi-hat. It was a virtuoso



HOW DIGITAL EDITING CREATES NEW WAYS TO PLAY

THE DAWN OF THE DESKTOP GUITARIST

performance—even if the virtuosity took place onscreen rather than on the frets.

Desktop digital recording, with its vast abilities to move, retune, resize, and mutate sounds, is inspiring new ways of playing guitar. No longer can guitarists assume their work is done once the notes leave soundholes or speakers. In the desktop-audio world, a guitar performance is not so much a finished canvas as a preliminary sketch.

NEW ATTITUDES

Carmer—who co-produced Third Eye Blind's sophomore release—is a perfect example of the new breed of desktop guitarist. "I've been playing since I was eight, but I'm still not as technically advanced as a lot of guitarists," he admits. "But I've found another way to play—I create source material that has the sound of a guitar, but then I go back and push things around to create something that not even a technically amazing guitarist could play."

Tony Hoffer also cherishes the spontaneity afforded by desktop's "track now/tweak later" method. Hoffer has spent the past year co-producing Beck's upcoming release, as well as

crafting remixes for bands such as Jamiroquai and Citizen King.

"Digital audio has changed me as a guitarist," he insists. "Now I can take a 16-bar section, loop it for 20 minutes, overdub all kinds of things with my pedals, and then sift through them. It's the same when I'm recording other guitarists. I've had Beck and Smokey [Hormel, Beck's guitar accomplice] do a couple of improvised effects tracks—where they just free-associate while randomly messing around with cheap pedals—to produce all sorts of cool textural stuff and add an 'uncontrolled' aspect to the session. Then I go back and edit it all."

The fact that a song's sound and structure

BAD-ASS EDITING MOVES

Switching to a desktop digital-audio system forces you to think about sound in new ways. Here are some small-scale moves that can yield big-sounding results.

REORIENTATIONS

Fig. 1 depicts a single strummed guitar chord. The software shown is Pro Tools, but you'll see pretty much the same thing in any digital editing software. In Fig. 2, the

chord has been chopped up into thirty-second-note segments via the software's "grid" mode. In Fig. 3, I've shuffled many of the small segments. Notice how the general shape of the chord remains, but the individual chunks no longer line up exactly. This generates a rhythmically regular, but tonally unpredictable flickering. Fig. 4 goes a step further—every other segment has been deleted for a brutal ratcheting-like sound. You can soften

these effects with a quick fade-in and fade-out.

ROLE REVERSALS

Here's a great trick for emphasizing the beginning of a section—the guitar seems to swell out of nowhere, building up tension until it strikes decisively on the beat. In Fig. 5, I duplicated the chord, reversed the copy, and dragged it in front of the original region. I also added a short crossfade to

smooth the transition.

Sometimes it sounds good to reverse an entire phrase and play it against itself. In Fig. 6, the series of percussive chords on the upper track was copied to the lower one, flipped backward, and moved over till it sounded good against the original. Try setting the reversed sound to a lower volume than the original, and slide it around till it feels right.

Fig. 7 shows the desktop equivalent of the reversed-reverb trick popular in the '70s. To produce the ghostly effect of a backward reverb anticipating an upcoming sound, engineers

FIG. 1

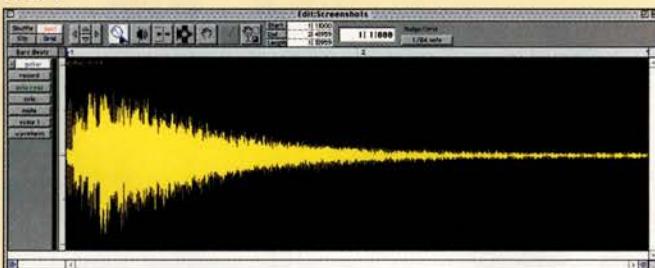


FIG. 2

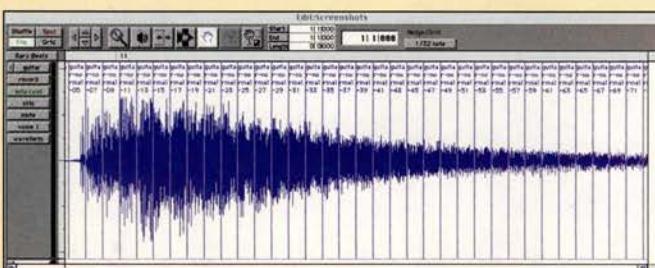


FIG. 3

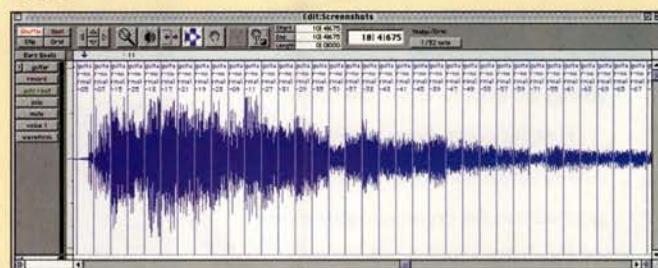
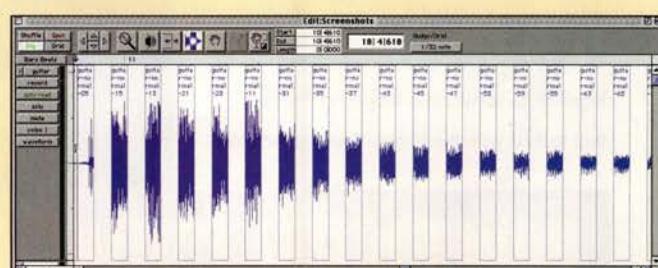


FIG. 4



may not be finalized until long after the instruments are tracked is also changing what producers expect from session guitarists. The last thing on the minds of desktop producers is a clean, start-to-finish performance. In fact, many session guitarists never hear the entire track. The producer might loop eight bars and say, "Give me a half-dozen chorus ideas," then repeat the procedure for a verse.

WAVEFORM EDITING

Because recording software lets you manipulate tiny pieces of sound in ways that are unthinkable with tape, it's no surprise that some of the medium's most startling sounds

come from microscopic sources. "Getting micro" with a sound file can feel like the audio equivalent of gazing in wonder at the textural details that emerge when you magnify a dust speck by a factor of thousands. "You can get deep into the waveforms and make whole new 'instruments' out of a tiny chunk of sound," notes Hoffer. "You can pitch-shift a sound fragment, time-expand it, flip it backwards, put it in a sampler, and play a melody. It can have a whole new life."

Desktop guitarists can also *animate* guitar parts by manipulating a *single* note. Carmer, for example, likes to produce a "rattlesnake" effect by slicing a guitar note into sixty-fourth-note sections and deleting every other segment.

Hoffer, however, suggests *scrambling* all the pieces. "That keeps the pitch of the note," he says, "but all the overtones happen in the wrong places. The effect is like the sample/hold feature on a synth, and it's something you definitely can't get from a 'real' guitar player."

AUTOMATION

Another huge advantage of desktop-audio systems is that you can automate almost any sonic parameter. As you move the virtual knobs, sliders, and switches of a recording program (or plug-in), the computer records your moves, letting you "play" effects in real time. Inspired goofs are never lost because you can

would flip over the tape reel, record a reverb-drenched signal onto an available track, and then flip the tape back. Here I returned to our original chord, reversed it, and ran the reversed signal through reverb—which I printed 100% wet on a second track. (Note how the note peaks are a little less defined than on the dry track.) Then I flipped both tracks

around again and nudged the now-reversed reverb ahead of the dry track.

TONAL EXPANSIONS

Fig. 8 demonstrates the sort of trouble you can stir up with plug-ins. I duplicated the original chord onto a new track and processed it with Opcode's Fusion Vinyl, which gave it an old-

record sound. (Note how the waveforms of the lower track are smaller and more compressed. The thin vertical lines are the crackles and pops introduced by the plug-in.) I chopped off the beginning of the original

track and the latter part of the processed one, then faded in the original as the Vinyl-ized one fades out. It sounds as if the guitar swells organically from a tiny, boxy sound to a fat, full-frequency chord.

—JG

FIG. 5

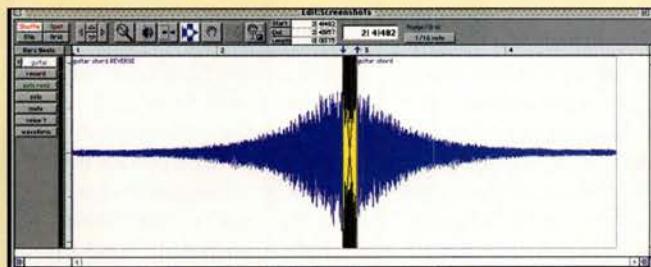


FIG. 6

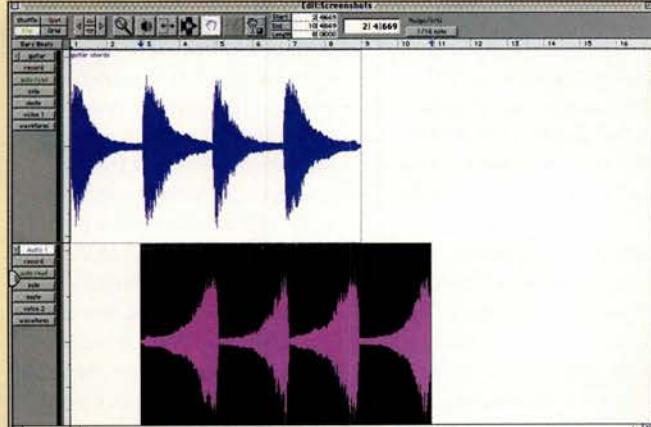


FIG. 7

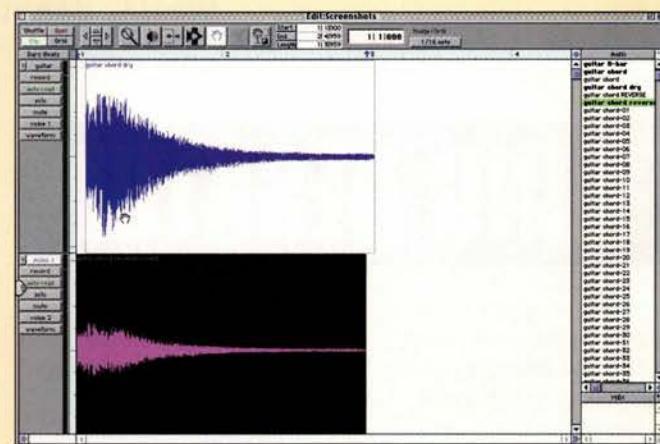
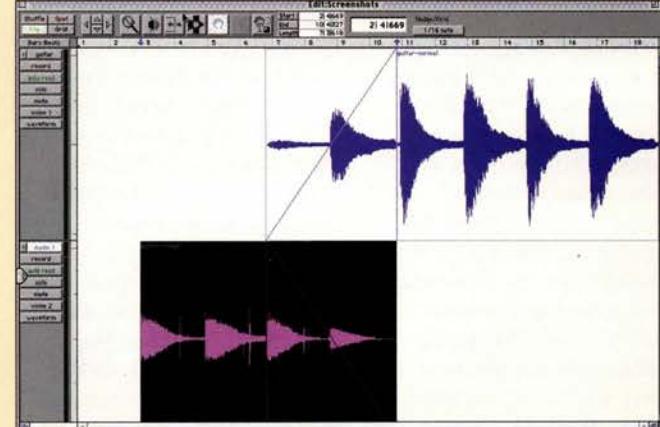


FIG. 8



THE DAWN OF THE DESKTOP GUITARIST

save all your mix moves to disk and recall them later. Although the possibilities can be overwhelming, Hoffer says he can create interesting effects simply by automating mutes.

"I'll set up a really dramatic sound with delay and modulation effects," he says, "but keep it off until exactly the right moment. For example, I like creating an extreme flanging/comb-filtering effect and bringing it in on, say, every fourth snare hit. I also like to manipulate EQ frequency and gain settings to produce a super-wah-wah effect that moves in time to the beat."

PLUG-INS

The big buzz in desktop recording is the proliferation of plug-ins—specialized audio tools that add extra functions to the basic software. All of today's leading software packages include a basic arsenal of real-time processing tools, and many others are available from third-party developers. (See the sidebar, "Plug-In Power" on p. 70.) Some plug-ins are simply

software versions of popular outboard effects, while others are radical audio effects with no analog equivalent.

One particularly remarkable plug-in is Line 6's Amp Farm (see "Virtual Vintage in the Nov. '98 GP)—a guitar amp simulator for Digidesign TDM systems. "It's great," enthuses Hoffer. "You can match cabinets to amps in ways that might be unlikely in reality, such as running a Deluxe through a Marshall cabinet, or a JCM 800 through a 1x12."

Despite the versatility offered by plug-ins, Carmer and Hoffer emphasize that you don't need expensive add-ons to make exciting sounds. For both, the essential tools are cutting and pasting, pitch-shifting, time-compressing, and reversing—the primary functions found in any quality recording/editing software.

Carmer, for example, swears by extreme time-expansion. "I like taking a one-bar phrase and stretching it out to eight bars," he says. "It might become a weird, keyboard-esque sound, but it doesn't sound like some generic synth patch. You can get dreamy, weird sounds that make it hard to put your finger on what the player did, but that still retain a guitar quality."

DIGITAL DANGERS

Even digital enthusiasts readily admit to

DESKTOP TOOLS

Antares, 11768 Atwood Dr., Auburn, CA 95603; (530) 878-4400; www.antares-systems.com

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Mark of the Unicorn, 1280 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138; (617) 576-2760; www.motu.com

Opcode, dist. by Gibson, 1818 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210; (615) 871-4500; www.gibson.com

Steinberg, 21354 Nordhoff St., Ste. 110, Chatsworth, CA 91311; (818) 993-4091; www.steinberg.net

Wave Mechanics, Box 144, Montclair, NJ 07042; (973) 728-2425; www.wavemechanics.com

GOING DESKTOP

There's not enough space here to address all the options for setting up a good, basic desktop-audio system, but these big-picture considerations should steer you in the right direction. (Also see "Who's Afraid of Hard Disk" in the June '99 GP.)

Format. A computer-based digital-audio system is the way to go—especially if you're interested in intense editing moves. Stand-alone digital multitrackers such as Roland's VS-840 and Korg's D8 sound good, but all editing occurs on small LCD screens. If you want to micro-manipulate tracks, you'll be grateful for the big screen and multifunction overviews of computer workstations. Furthermore, Mac

and PC digital-audio sequencers let you to choose from an ever-more-impressive array of plug-ins.

Software. The 600-pound gorilla of hard-disk systems—and the one used by a large percentage of digital-audio professionals—is Digidesign's Pro Tools. Pro Tools is awesome—it's fast, reliable, easier to master than other systems, and its TDM plug-in system is the best one going. High-end Pro Tools setups are integrated hardware/software systems that can cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, but other software-only packages can offer integrated digital recording and MIDI sequencing, slick interfaces, deep editing features, and decent plug-in libraries for

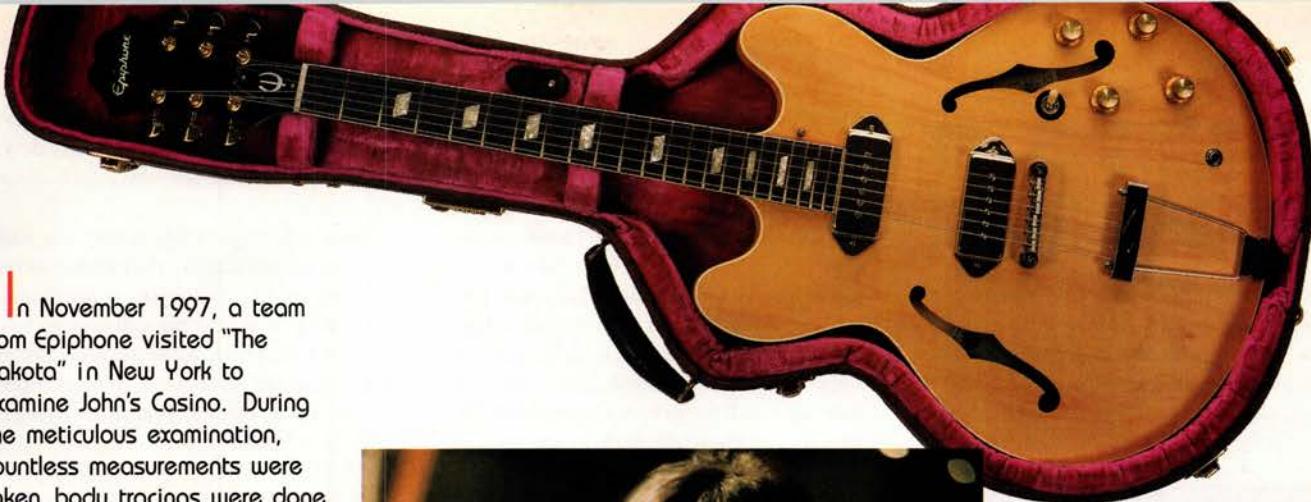
under \$500. (These systems use "native processing"—that is, they do their jobs using your computer's processors and require no extra hardware.) If you're just starting out in digital audio, chances are that one of these mid-priced packages will give you everything you need: Cakewalk's Pro Audio 6 (\$429) is for PC only; Mark of the Unicorn's Performer (\$495) and Opcode's Vision DSP (\$199) are for Mac only; Emagic's Logic Audio Gold (\$499) and Steinberg's Cubase VST (\$399) come in both flavors.

What else will you need? Maybe just a mic. Some musicians have made surprisingly good recordings tracking straight into the computer and mixing down via the computer's analog stereo output. Adding a hardware sound card with the appropriate analog and digital connections will improve sound quality and let

you do things such as route tracks to external mixers and effects, or mix direct to digital. A number of basic cards sell for well under \$500.

Another likely acquisition is a CD burner (approximately \$350) for capturing your tunes on disc and backing up data. And you *will* need to back up. A single multitracked pop tune can easily hog 500 megabytes of memory. Yet another upgrade strategy is obtaining a mic preamp. You can spend thousands of dollars on boutique preamps or channels pillaged from vintage mixing consoles, but you can also get surprisingly good results with a modest tube preamp such as the \$159 ART Tube MP. And don't forget to use all the guitar junk you already own—countless big-time producers rely on cheap guitar gizmos for a quick infusion of lo-fi soul.

—JG



In November 1997, a team from Epiphone visited "The Dakota" in New York to examine John's Casino. During the meticulous examination, countless measurements were taken, body tracings were done and all components of the guitar were photographed. As a result and in cooperation with Yoko Ono, Epiphone proudly introduces the Limited Edition John Lennon "Revolution" and "1965" Casinos.

The "John Lennon 1965 Casino" is a reproduction of the guitar as John originally purchased it with the sunburst finish and stock hardware. The "John Lennon Revolution Casino" is a reproduction of the "stripped" guitar featuring one dull coat of lacquer, gold Grover® tuners and the pickguard removed.

A total of 1,965 of these individually hand-numbered historic instruments will be produced. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each will be donated to "The BMI Foundation, Inc. for the John Lennon Scholarship Fund" which supports music education.



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THE DAWN OF THE DESKTOP GUITARIST

missing certain aspects of tape-based recording. For Hoffer, it's more than a matter of sonics. "Working with tape in a conventional studio challenges the musician," he says. "The tape rolls, and you have a limited number of times to get it right. If a performance isn't good

enough, you generally have to erase it all and start over—as opposed to assembling it from little pieces. That pressure can push musicians to inspiration.

"But digital recording can cause a musician to lose perspective because you can spend a week on just one guitar track. You can keep recording and recording till you get to the point where you just want to erase the song. And with unlimited tracks, you can have too much material to choose from. We have that problem with Beck. In one pass, he

might spout 100 guitar ideas—most of them really good—but getting those ideas down to the two parts you really need can be almost impossible."

But few digital recordists see anything soulless or mechanical about the process—even when it involves tweaking tracks at infinitesimal scales. "I work at the millisecond level because that's where *feel* lives," says Carmer. "You can change a track's feel on the computer—and feel is, after all, what you're trying to create with music."

PLUG-IN POWER

Here's a survey of some of the coolest plug-ins currently available. The emphasis here is on effects that would be impossible—or at least difficult—in the analog realm. (TDM, Premiere, and Audiosuite are Mac formats; DirectX is for PCs; and VST is dual platform.)

Antares Auto-Tune. The more you use pitch-correction software, the more you start hearing its effect on current pop recordings. Programs such as Auto-Tune are flattering a *lot* of today's singers. They're also great for fixing errant bass tracks and guitar lines—though they are really only reliable when rectifying monophonic parts. (\$599 for TDM; \$399 for VST; \$99 for "light" auto-only VST version.)

DUY DSPider. DSPider lets you build your own plug-ins by dragging small modules onto a "blackboard" screen. Patient tweakers could easily spend years devising new sounds; the less patient will be thrilled by more than 200 innovative presets. (\$1,495; TDM only.)

DUY DaD Tape. Tape mimics the tones of specific tape machines from the



Line 6 Amp Farm

'60s through the '80s. (\$599; TDM only.)

DUY DaD Valve. Valve is a fascinating vacuum-tube simulator that not only offers dozens of tube response patterns tailored to different instruments, but also lets you mix the dynamic response of one sort of instrument with the spectral response of another. (\$199 for Premiere; \$469 for Audiosuite and VST; \$799 for TDM.)

Line 6 Amp Farm. This may be the best tube-amp simulation ever. It convincingly apes 11 classic combos and stacks, allows for mixing and matching between amp and cabinet simulations, and lets you automate all amp controls. It's also great on many non-guitar tracks. (\$595; TDM only.)

Opcode Fusion Vinyl. This super-realistic vinyl simulator can turn squeaky-clean digital recordings into junk store 78s. This non-real time plug-in can make anything sound old and small via distortion, compression, and frequency attenuation. (\$99; Premiere, Audiosuite, VST, and DirectX.)

Steinberg Magneto. Magneto excels at simulating the distinctive coloration of analog tape. You can even overdrive it to evoke the "in the red" tones of vintage rock recordings. (\$399; VST, TDM, and DirectX.)

Steinberg Red Valve-It. The Red is a fine amp simulator, although it doesn't approach Amp Farm's realism and range. (\$199; TDM and VST.)



Opcode Fusion Vinyl

Wave Mechanics Pitch Doctor. Pitch Doctor boasts a slick interface and relatively glitch-free pitch correction. (\$695 as bundled with Pure Pitch, a cool "smart" pitch shifter plug-in; TDM only.)



Steinberg Magneto

PLUGGING IN FOR LESS

While many of these programs offer enormous value, you've probably realized by now that plug-ins can become an expensive habit. But there is a cheap lunch in the audio world—shareware! Two shareware/freeware programs in particular stand out for their ingenuity and processing might. Neither is actually a plug-in, but both can do dramatic things to your audio files.

Devised by Cal Arts University electronic music guru Tom Erbe, **Soundhack** lets you morph, mutate, and cross-fertilize audio files. Download it from www.hitsquad.com/smm/programs/soundhack. (If you use Soundhack, Erbe asks that you send him \$30—or some music you created with it.)

Similar in scope, but more fantastical is Akira Rabelais' **Argeiphontes Lyre**—a mad blend of antique graphics, arcane language, and programs with names such as "Mammonite Idiot Aunt" and "More Erotica Narratives." Equal parts sonic terrorism and conceptual art, the program may confuse, but it seldom bores. Get it for free at <http://inner.cortex.com/~tiberio/infomac/sci/argeiphontes-lyre.shtml>.

—JG

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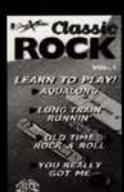
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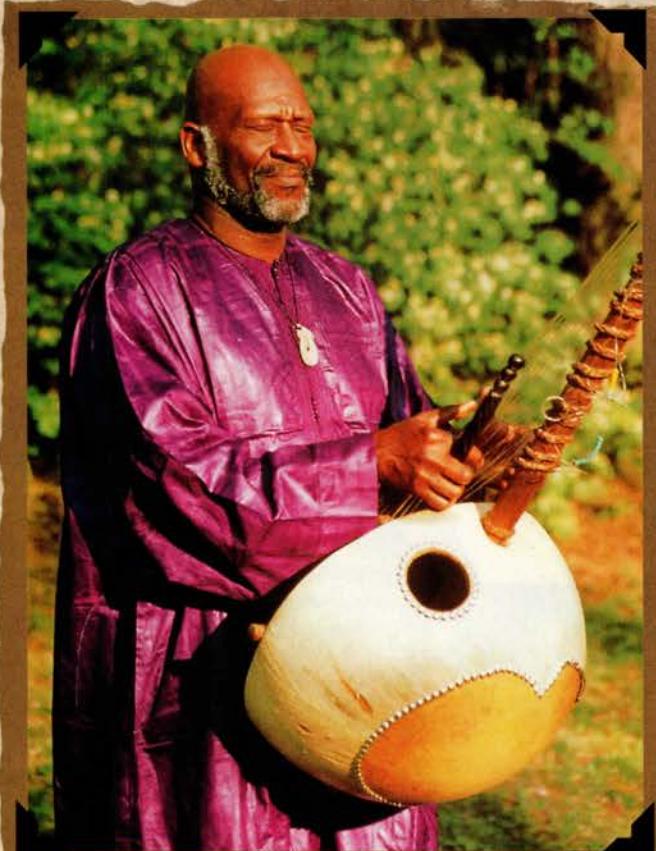
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HOMEWARD BOUND

Story and
Photographs By
Banning Eyre

Taj Mahal Reconnects American Folk and Blues to Africa



Mahal rehearsing with the kora—a 21-string harp.

IT'S

old news that many musicologists believe rock and roll, jazz,

blues, rap, and even bluegrass banjo originated in Africa. Malian guitarist Ali Farka Toure has long claimed that the blues

is simply a *debased* offshoot of ancient music from his West African homeland. Although a lot of blues people beg to differ, it's difficult to enter the debate if you have little familiarity with African music. But one listen to *Kulanjan* [Hannibal]—a collaboration between Taj Mahal and seven traditional West African musicians—cuts through a lot of the rhetoric and reveals tangible links between musical styles on both sides of the Atlantic.

For Mahal, the Delta blues/West African connection explored on *Kulanjan* is part of a larger tapestry that includes all kinds of New World music—from calypso to country—as well as the African styles and forms that have colored and influenced music over the centuries.

"My whole life has been leading up to this," says Mahal, who grew up in homes resounding with roots music—due in part to his Caribbean ancestry and his father's support of Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement. "Our house was a place where you'd come if you wanted to know what was going on. During that time, I was exposed to Caribbean culture, Southern culture, and

Latin culture. To me, it was all a part of the bigger family. We always had a connection to the Caribbean and Africa."

After decades of playing American roots music, Mahal was keen to make a record that would forge new connections between current American and West African music. He called on his old friend, Toumani Diabate of Bamako, Mali—a master of the 21-string harp called the kora—and asked him to put together a group for what was to become *Kulanjan*.

Kulanjan's ensemble represents three genres of West African music: Bambara, Wasoulou, and Manding griot. Five of the seven Africans (including Diabate) are griots—musicians born to preserve the memory of the past through song, and whose lyrical, traditional music uses a seven-note scale. The two non-griots are singer Ramatou Diakite and Dougouye Coulibaly (who plays the 6-string kamalengoni and the 4-string bolon, both traditional harps). Diakite and Coulibaly represent Wassoulou and Bambara music. The Wasoulou sound features loping dance rhythms and funky melodies played on the kamalengoni, mostly using a

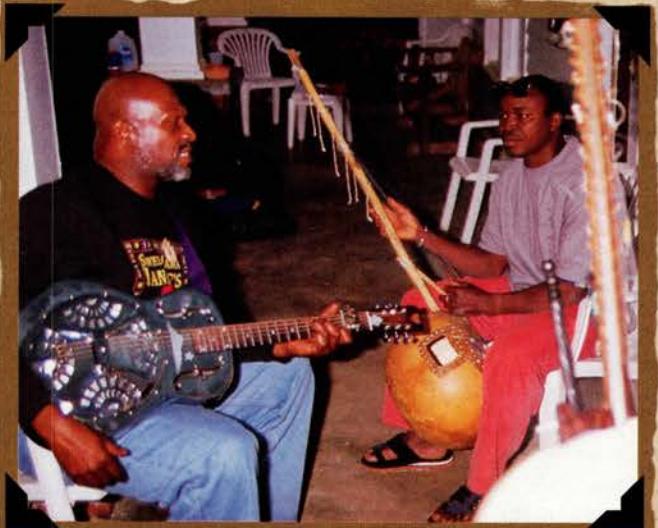
Dorian pentatonic scale, rather than the minor pentatonic scale typical of Bambara music.

Over the course of a week-long recording session in Athens, Georgia, Mahal (who sang and primarily played Dobro) and the African musicians continually changed styles and combinations of instruments, tried new formulas for each song, and recorded with minimal rehearsal to capture the freshness of each new encounter.

Mali's Kora Master

Diabate and Mahal met in 1991, during Diabate's first U.S. tour. Although Diabate began playing kora at age seven, his father—who, in 1970, made *Cordes Anciennes*, a landmark duo record with kora player Djelimadi Sissoko—was too busy to teach him, so Diabate cut his own path.

"I wanted to do something for the kora that was completely different from what my father did," he says. "So I listened to



A porch jam with Mahal and kora player Dougouye Coulibaly.

tapes and the radio. There was the music of Otis Redding, Bad Company, Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, Johnny Halliday, Bembeya Jazz National of Guinea, and Les Ambassadeurs with Salif Keita."

Influenced by such diverse music, Diabate went to London in 1987 to record a solo record,

Kaira, and took flak from conservative forces within the griot community—including his own father.

"People said, 'Why do you want to change the kora?'" Diabate recalls. "But like Taj says, 'An educated person is someone who can communicate with everyone.' If I just stay a griot,



"My whole life has been leading up to this," says Mahal (third from left) of his musical and cultural summit with seven traditional West African musicians.

MAHAL'S BLUE THUMB

Taj Mahal's powerful thumb has always been a mainstay of his sound. He braces his pinky below the soundhole, and picks melodies and chords with his index and middle fingers while his leaping, alternating thumb establishes the groove.

"Most people don't recognize that a lot of American fingerstyle guitar was made for dance," he explains. "So you have to keep a steady, strong rhythm for the dancer. My style was developed around the picking of Reverend Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, and Jesse Fuller. When the whole beatnik-jazz-bebop, beret and goatee, dark glasses kind of thing happened during the late-'50s and early-'60s folk revival, old banjo pickers and blues men from the South began to tour. One of the high points was seeing Jesse Fuller. That was exactly how I wanted to see somebody play—that thumbpicking idea killed me." —BE

HOMeward Bound

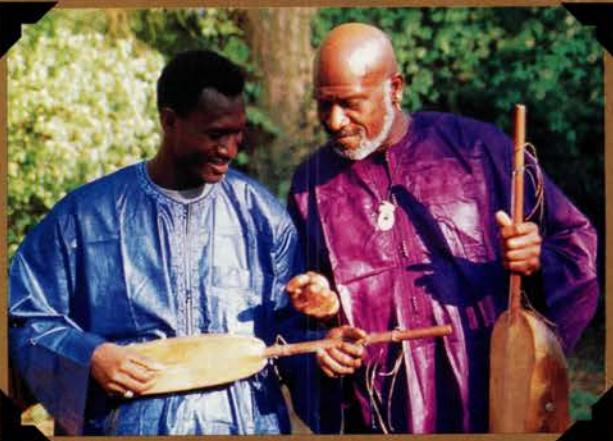
that's okay. That's my African history. But we must do all we can to maintain our culture and *communicate* with this music. We must take this music to Europe and America."

Diabate's family spans 70 generations of kora players, so despite a progressive bent that led him to make recordings incorporating pop, flamenco, and American roots music, he is schooled in tradition. The kora is like a combination of a harp and a lute, with two planes of strings and a resonating gourd. You play by wrapping two or three fingers around two stabilizing posts and picking with both thumbs

and both index fingers. A good kora player can use those four digits to create bass lines, melodies, and counter-melodies. But the kora player can't bend notes, or play notes outside of a particular scale. On traditional griot songs, Diabate can soar into rippling solos with ease, but on a blues such as *Kulanjan's* "Take this Hammer," the kora's limitations kick in, and Diabate must rely on fast, cycling rhythms and unexpected phrasing to get an appropriate blues feel.

Ngoni Blues

The fretless ngori (also



Mahal and "blues ngori" star Basekou Kouyate.

called koni or halam) is a more natural blues instrument, and Diabate brought along one of its most progressive players, Basekou Kouyate. This an-

cient, West African spike-lute is widely considered to be the ancestor of the banjo because its body is a drum—rather than a box—and it has a short

ENGINEER JERRY BOYS ON RECORDING KULANJAN

The *Kulanjan* sessions took place at John Keane's 24-track, analog studio in Athens, Georgia. At the board was Jerry Boys, who engineered the original recordings of *The Buena Vista Social Club* in Cuba. The tracks went down on Ampex 499 tape spooled onto an Otari MTR-90 running at 15 ips with Dolby SR. All the string players were recorded together in the studio's big room, the balafon and piano were tracked in a room across the hall, and the singers were isolated in a vocal booth. Few songs went beyond first or second takes.

"We used a Trident 80 console because it's simple, clean, and crisp—a good board for acoustic music," says Boys. "And because this was an acoustic, ethnic-based record, I used very little EQ and effects. Most of the processing was gentle compression: a dbx 900 for Taj's vocals and Dobro, a Neve 22-54 for the other singers, and a Tube-Tech for the bolon."

"I used single-mic positions most of the time, because I wanted that sitting-in-the-front-room, everybody-playing-together sound. If you use two or more mics, the sound gets hyped up and doesn't sound natural. To get a sound, I listen to the instrument and point the mic at where the sound comes from—pretty simple. On the ngori, for example, the sound comes predominantly from behind the bridge by the soundhole. The koras, on the other hand, are very quiet and the sound comes

from lots of different places. It was hard getting the kora loud enough to be heard above the other instruments.

"But the bolon was the most difficult to record. I've yet to get a sound from it that I'm completely happy with. When you stand in the room—six or ten feet away from it—you hear this very full bass and the attack of the note. But microphones can't document the feeling of bass expanding into a room, or your ears' ability to focus on something in the distance. So you either put a microphone close to the bolon and lose the fullness, or move the mic back and lose the attack. If you use both a close mic and a distant mic, you get phase cancellation. We settled on pointing one mic just below where the player hits the strings with his fingers, and then using a little bit of compression to bring up the low end."

—BE

Mahal's Dobro: '60s Neumann M269 tube mic

MIC SELECTIONS

Mahal's vocal: Neumann TLM170

Other singers: Neumann U87

Kora: Neumann U87 (close to strings), Shure SM57 (near soundhole)

Ngori, kamalengoni, bolon, and piano: Neumann U89

Balafon: AKG C414-TLII

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string like a 5-string banjo. Kouyate picks by bracing his hand with his pinky, and works his thumb hard. High melodies are plucked with only his index finger—held straight, almost parallel to the strings, and pointing back towards the neck. That finger picks in both directions—sometimes very fast—and the nail is used essentially as a flatpick.

Mahal first met Kouyate in 1992, at a conference of banjo players in New Lebanon, Tennessee. "When Basekou played," says Mahal, "you could hear mosquitoes walking. Ronnie Stoneman, from an old American banjo family, came up afterwards, and said, 'The banjo has been in our

family for 250 years, but this is the first time I've ever seen where it came from!"

On that visit, Kouyate—who favors a minor pentatonic scale that sounds more down-and-dirty than the stately melodies of the Manding griots—picked up some pointers about blues phrasing from Mahal, and in his work with Toumani Diabate back home, gained a reputation for "blues ngoni." Kouyate also developed a repertoire of percussive techniques, and uses rhythmic scratches and squeaks for dramatic effect.

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Sarala [Verve]
Hank Jones with Cheick Tidiane Seck and the Mandinkas
A legendary jazz pianist delves into Malian music.

instrument on *Kulanjan* is the kamalengoni (young boy's harp)—which was invented in

the 1960s by an adventuresome musician named Alata Brulaye. The harp is a smaller,

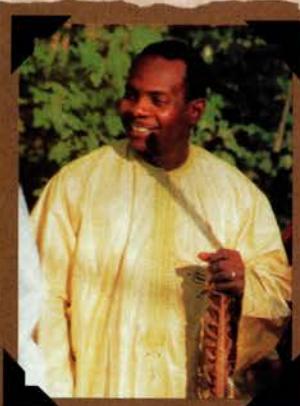
higher-pitched version of the venerable doso ngoni (hunter's harp), heard by Americans in the hands of musicians such as Don Cherry and David Lindley. In Mali, the doso ngoni is played only in spiritual gatherings of hunters, and is off-limits to pop musicians. Brulaye's invention took the basic timbre of the doso ngoni out of the sacred realm and into the recreational. These days, kamalengonis are a common sight on concert stages.

The kamalengoni's big moment on *Kulanjan* comes on one of the album's most transcendent tracks, "Ol' Georgie Buck"—a banjo tune Mahal learned years ago from Elizabeth Cotten. It sounds like an old, rural blues with no chord changes—just a vamp and a cycling melody. Mahal first played the song for Coulibaly, who found a typical Was-

soulou riff that worked nicely with the melody. The song begins with a darting kamalengoni intro and then drops into the Wassoulou genre's signature triplet groove. When Mahal's bluesy, plaintive voice enters the mix, it's hard *not* to feel a strong connection between American roots music and Malian music.

Picking Through Time

The four griot songs on *Kulanjan* challenged Mahal as a guitarist. This is highly formalized music, and its rhythms are tricky. But ever since Mahal heard the late kora genius Alhadji Bai Konte in the late '60s, he has developed an ear for what he calls "the African melodiousness" that is quite different from the angst of the blues. On *Kulanjan*, Mahal did not try to



Kora master Toumani Diabate assembled the musicians for the Kulanjan sessions.

match the griots' electrifying improvisations, instead he opted for convincing accompaniments that he could play with certainty. On the stately "Tunkaranke," for example, he plays a simple arpeggio. It's

not something a Malian guitarist would play, but in its understated elegance, it fits.

For Mahal, the *Kulanjan* project was a step forward in a lifelong quest to "close the circle" of American and African roots music. Mahal has always used the guitar as a tool for his personal cultural study. Each new blues technique and each new American style he has mastered was another step back toward those African roots.

"As much guitar as I have learned through the past 30 years, my study is now these African instruments," he says. "There's nowhere else to go. If you can't get back to the blues, you aren't going to make it to Africa. And, although I've had a great deal of popularity playing American folk and blues, nothing beats what went down recording *Kulanjan*. Nothing."

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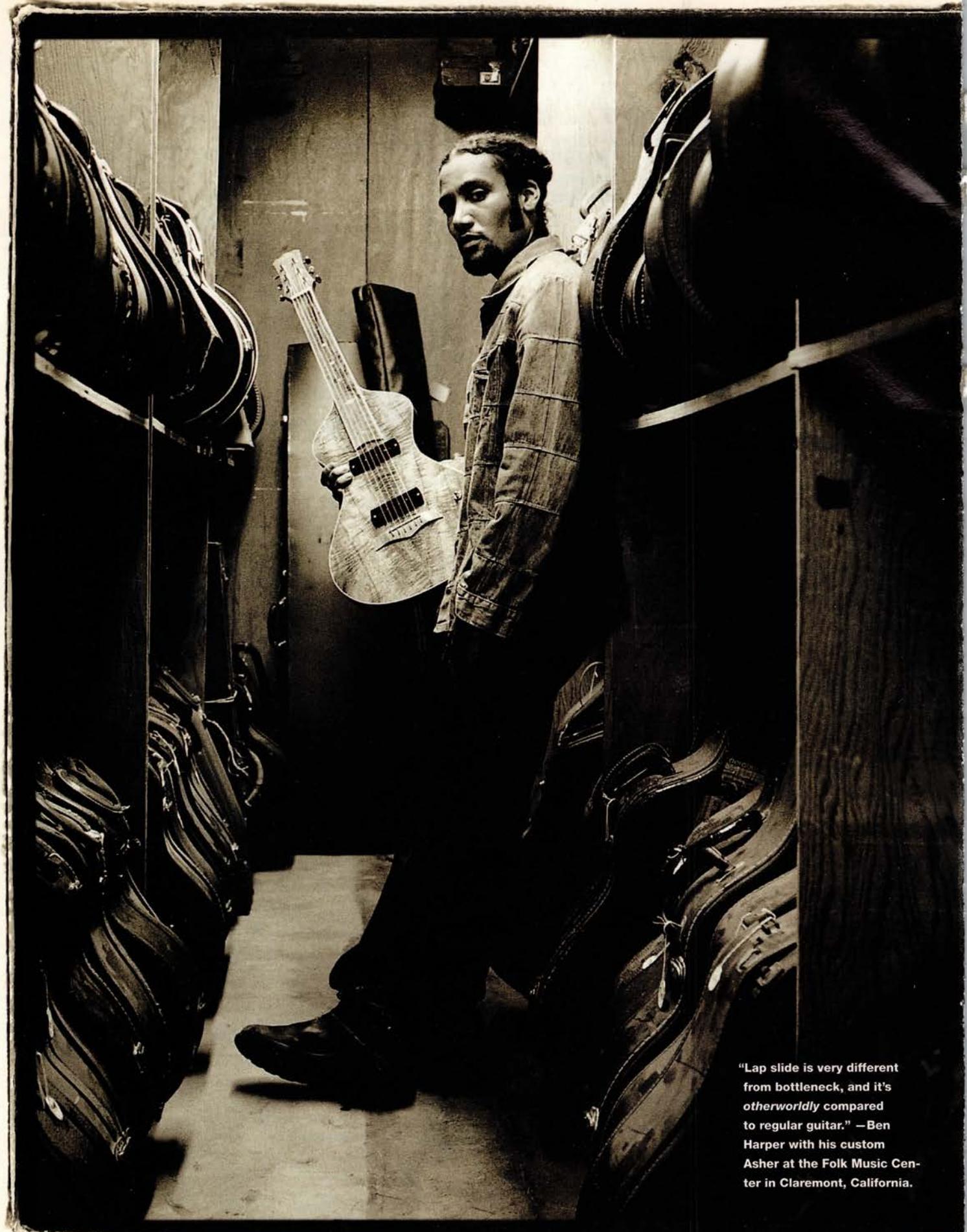
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"Lap slide is very different from bottleneck, and it's otherworldly compared to regular guitar." —Ben Harper with his custom Asher at the Folk Music Center in Claremont, California.

ROOTS RADICAL

BEN HARPER AMPS UP THE FOLK-BLUES TRADITION

Iake no mistake about it," says Ben Harper, "making a good record is pure, unadulterated pain. If you fall and break your leg—that's pain. But I'm telling you, the phase between pain and death? That's making a

good record. It's extreme." ■ Best known for his powerful songwriting and fiery slide licks—played on an amplified, acoustic Weissenborn lap guitar—Harper does not take music-making lightly. Starting with 1994's *Welcome to the Cruel World*, he has gradually built a reputation for playing intense, uncompromising music. Mixing incisive, socially conscious lyrics with rootsy

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANNY CLINCH

ROOTS RADICAL

riffs, he manages to pay homage to such traditional bluesmen as Mississippi John Hurt and Blind Willie Johnson, while simultaneously forging new directions in lap-slide guitar.

Harper's albums are remarkably eclectic. Over the course of a few songs, he'll meld introspective fingerpicking, trippy backwards slide, string quartet counterpoint, old timey mandolin, and blistering feedback. And the California native isn't afraid to sing about social issues most rockers wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole: racism ("Oppression"), homelessness ("Homeless Child"), and wife abuse ("Widow of a Living Man"). Death, redemption, and spirituality are key themes in each of his albums. While many contemporary bands strive to recreate the sounds of '60s music, they seldom have the courage or perception to revive the genre's social consciousness. In his late twenties, Harper is one of the few young musicians willing to carry the torch of '60s protest music into the next millennium.

In many ways, Harper redefines the meaning of guitar hero. Although he plays skillfully, he values vibe more than technique. He also knows the instrument's history, yet isn't afraid to push tradition. He sees the beauty in stylistic diversity, yet understands the importance of finding a unique voice. And he loves to collect guitars, but knows it's the songs—not the tools—that matter.

Ben Harper on MP3 and "Evil" Record Labels

Everyone has a different take on what the MP3 situation means," says Harper. "People who have already made millions from record sales are totally down for MP3. 'Bring it on—why not?' But I know people who are in the position of trying to recoup recording money and are completely opposed to it: 'Hey look, I'm trying to repay this debt here, and even make a little money, and people are getting the music for free. What's up with that?'

"Then there are bands who are having a hard time getting signed, and are hoping that MP3 offers a chance for wider exposure without major-label support. But I know people who have signed with online labels and they aren't selling the number of records they'd like. The reality still is that you sell records by playing good music, exposing it to people yourself, and motivating them to go get it."

"And yet some people are saying, 'MP3! Down with the record companies!' How stupid can you be? If it weren't for big record companies, do you think Nirvana would have had the means to hook up with Butch Vig, spend four grand a day in the studio, and make a record like *Nevermind*? Hell no. It takes major-label support to know a group's chemistry, get them into a studio with a producer, and give them access to the expensive gear that facilitates making good-sounding records. And don't forget that labels also put the money out to get music to peoples' ears, because it doesn't just appear on their doorsteps. Record companies invest a lot of money in an artist's career and are a conduit for some of the greatest music ever—think of the old Verve or Stax records. Labels take the bear's share of the percentage, because they take the bear's share of the risk. Period."

"But everybody needs a bad guy, and I'm not here to defend the giant corporate labels because some of them are screwed up. But you know what? You've got to see both sides of it—the good and the bad. Stuff does fall through the cracks, and you might not get signed if your music doesn't have that instantaneous hit factor, but the bottom line is, if you've got the songs, you will get heard."

Our interview occurred over the course of two days. We spoke at Harper's Los Angeles home, in restaurants, and while zipping along L.A.'s notorious freeways. Though bombarded by a steady stream of phone calls from his manager, booking agent, and record label, Harper never lost his energy and enthusiasm for discussing guitar players, equipment ("I'm a total gear freak"), songwriting, and his new record—*Burn to Shine* [Virgin]. He even shared his lap slide tunings and techniques (see "Lap Dancing" on p. 88).

• • •

About six years ago, I remember seeing you play with Taj Mahal on Austin City Limits and wondering, "Who is that guy with braids playing blues on a Weissenborn?"

It seems like six minutes ago! Taj gave me my first professional gig, but I was at a musical crossroads. I loved Jimi's Strat tone and I loved the acoustic honesty of John Hurt and Blind Willie,



A man of many strings: Harper returns a few of his instruments to storage.

and I wanted to get both sounds at the same time. I showed up at the *Austin City Limits* studio with an amp and pedals. We set up for soundcheck, I hit my first note, and the whole band turned their heads and went, "What are you *doing*?" So I scaled back and went with the clean acoustic sound for the show, but I realized right then that there were going to be some growing pains.

You were raised in a musical family—both your grandmother and mother played guitar, right?

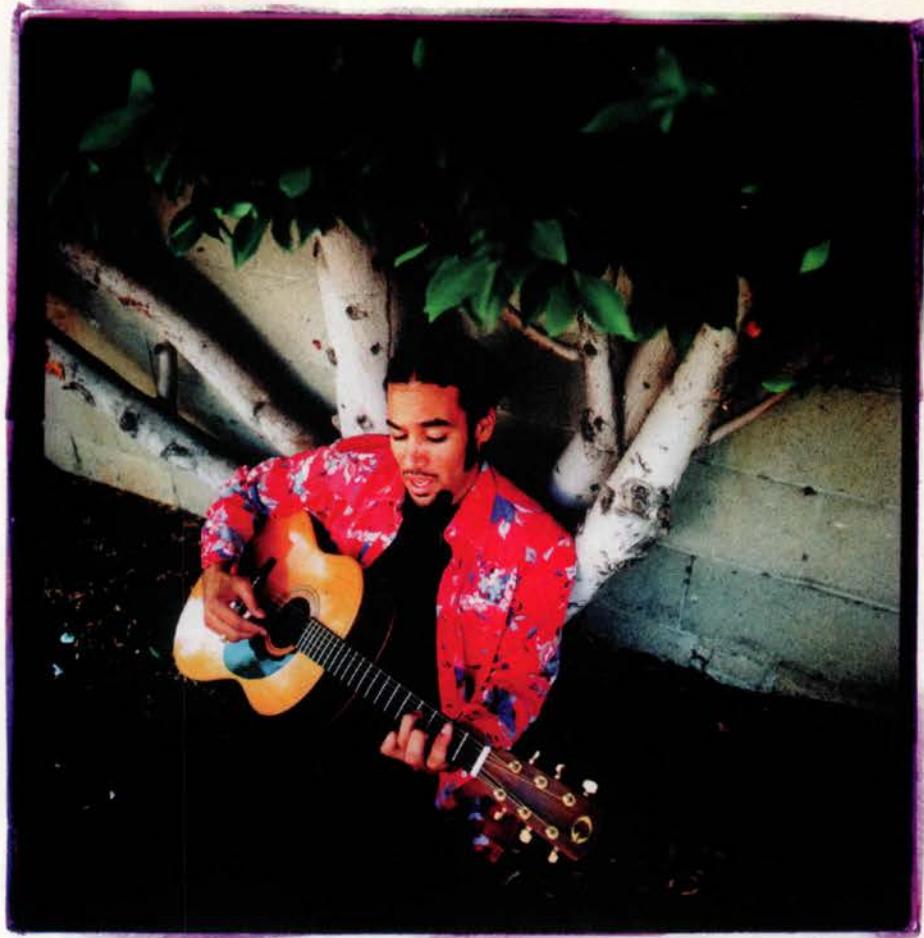
Yes. In 1958, my grandparents started the Folk Music Center in Claremont, California. It's a music store and acoustic musical instrument museum, and it has now been certified as a historic landmark. My grandmother taught guitar there, and my grandfather—a poet and philosopher—still works there alongside his grandchildren. I was raised in the store, surrounded by acoustic instruments from all over the world.

My mom plays folk, country, and soul, and sings like Emmylou Harris and Dolly Parton. That's where I come from—folk and acoustic blues. But as a kid, I listened to Stevie Wonder, Otis Redding, and Led Zeppelin because they were part of my parents' record collection. The Allman Brothers' *Idlewild South*, Little Feat's *Dixie Chicken*, Bob Marley's *Natty Dread*, and Jimi Hendrix's *Smash Hits* were constantly playing in my house. On Saturday, my dad would sit down with his congas in front of the TV and jam to *Soul Train*—that was when *Soul Train* had James Brown.

The musical diversity of your youth still seems to drive you creatively, as Burn to Shine is a sonic departure from your first three albums. For instance, your feedback-laced, Weissenborn-through-Marshall riffs have given way to an even heavier distortion.

You're hearing my Asher guitar. On the previous record, *Will to Live*, I think I pushed an acoustic lap guitar as loud as it could go with the crunch stuff on "Faded" and "Will to Live." Those old Weissenborns are only held together with hide glue, and I could feel them vibrating in a dangerous way. The volume level was rattling the ribs loose. Because the neck is hollow, the entire guitar is a chamber. The resonance was coming up out of the soundhole and not going into the pickup, and the feedback was taking off in directions that were unusable. Feedback is good—it's nice to be a little out of control—but I need to be able to contain it in a musical way. I also bat guitars around, and my slapping and pounding didn't help.

So I went to [luthier] Billy Asher and said, "How can we translate acoustic lap guitar into something that's a cross between a Weissenborn and a Les Paul? He came up with the instrument I played on *Burn to Shine*. It's built of Honduras mahogany—like an old Les Paul—but it's a neck-through-body design. The wings are honeycombed with nine hollow chambers and covered



"Your instrument and sound reflect your personality. If they don't, you're not reaching deep enough."

with a koa top. Billy also hollows out the neck and fills it with graphite. He built several prototypes—with and without the graphite—but somehow the graphite connects the resonance to the rest of the body, so we settled on that. The Asher also has a brass saddle, which seems to enhance sustain.

I was excited when Billy built this guitar—it gets such a mad tone. Finally I could get solid-body volume and sustain, control feedback, and still have some hollow resonance that filters up through the pickups instead of through the open hole.

What about the two pickups? They resemble P-90s.

Tom Anderson winds the magnetic pickups, and there's also an L.R. Baggs pickup in the bridge.

The Asher sounds very different from a traditional lap steel, and it obviously led you down a new sonic road.

One reason the Asher sounds different is be-

cause it has a full, 25" scale length—like the Weissenborn. Typical lap steels have a 22.75" scale.

But my songs have been growing in this direction all along. I've been into exploring resonance and letting notes ring—pushing them to the edge before they go into feedback.

What about your tone bar?

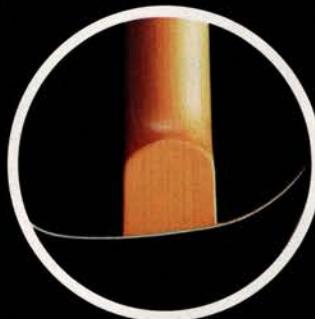
For years I used a Stevens bar, but once I had tried a Sheerhorn bar, there was no going back. It's the perfect weight, and it's easy to grip. I also use an aluminum Ernie Ball volume pedal. They're smooth, and I like the action.

I see you're using bronze strings on the Asher—that's unusual with magnetic pickups.

Bronze does something nice to the overall tone—you can give it a little more volume and not lose warmth. Bronze wound strings don't get picked up by the magnetic field as strongly as nickel winds, but I just dig in that much harder on the bass strings, so it's not a problem.

Do you use custom string gauges for your Weissenborns?

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ROOTS RADICAL

I used to, but now for simplicity I use stock D'Addario strings. On the slide guitars, I don't go lighter than a .012 set. If I'm tuned to *D* or *E*, I use light phosphor bronze D'Addarios. If I'm in *C* or *B*, I use mediums. Below *B*, you've got to use heavy gauge, so it won't feel like spaghetti. I even have one guitar strung with a .014 set.

What other guitars and amps did you use on Burn to Shine?

All the crunch slide is the Asher. My main amp was a 100-watt, 3-channel Demeter head running through a Marshall 4x10 cabinet with Celestion speakers. The Demeter's red channel—the nasty one—had plenty of crunch, but occasionally I'd add an Ibanez TS-808 Tube Screamer to send it over the top. Mark Ford, who used to be in the Black Crowes, recommended that pedal to me. He's an *insane* player.

I also used a pink-face, 3-channel Soldano tube preamp through a solid-state Crown amp—that setup produced a beautiful, sparkly clean sound. My other amps were a Vox AC30, a '57 Fender Twin, and a mid- to late-'50s 4x10 Bassman. All our tweed amps have the original Jensen speakers.

Did you layer amp tones?

Quite a bit. In "Less," for example, the outro has the Demeter, the Vox, and the Soldano—all piled on top of one another to get different frequency ranges of crunch. But I'd also switch amps for different sections in a song.

Did you record each section separately?

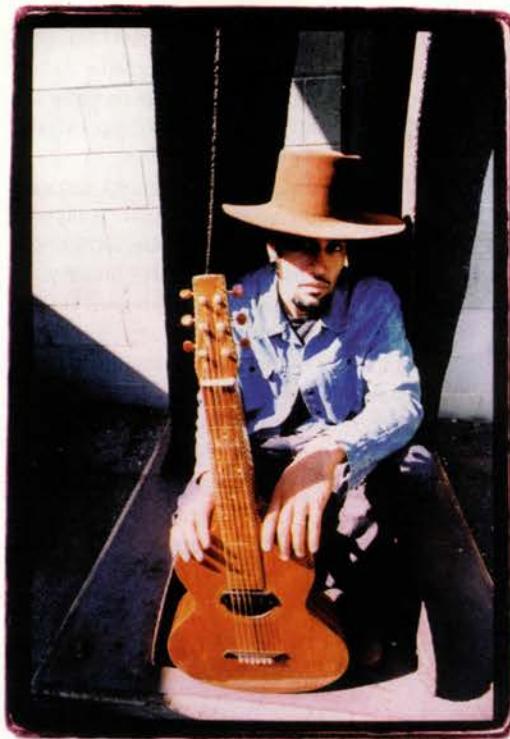
No, I just switched between amps using an A/B box. Like in "The Woman in You," the verse is relatively clean, but the chorus has a little more grind. I used the Twin for the verses and the Bassman for the choruses.

That's like having a cosmic stombox—a different circuit, a different transformer, and different tubes and speakers.

It's great. We did layer crunch sounds in the bridge—the screaming section with the harder guitars. It's a matter of mixing and matching amps until you get the perfect bed.

Did you demo your songs before going into the studio?

I record each song live on cassette and give it to our producer, JP Plunier, so he can get his wheels turning. Then the band goes into a rehearsal space, and we work out the music. We don't learn the songs, we just sketch maps. We know where the chords go, yet we leave room



for improvisation and surprise.

So a lot of the arranging happens at the actual recording sessions?

Yeah. Separating the good from the bad is a job unto itself. It's crucial to know when something is rough but good, compared to rough but *bad*. It takes a lifetime just to learn how to sing or play guitar or write songs. To juggle all three and make production decisions is asking a lot, so I trust JP to evaluate the performances. Our relationship goes back 20 years—we're from the same hometown. My definition of a producer is someone who can come into the studio and make you sound better than you can by yourself—and JP does that.

Do you track as a band?

We record as much live as humanly possible. On a good day, we'll get bass, drums, guitar, and a vocal.

You cut the vocal with the instruments?

Yes, but not all the time. All the acoustic stuff is done at once—guitar and vocal.

Where did you record?

At Alpha Studio in North Hollywood with its wood rooms and big cement spaces. We used old Neve preamps, a Trident board, and tube mics.

What drew you to lap slide?

People often ask me that, and I don't have an answer. Why did Miles play trumpet? Why does anyone in this world decide to play trombone?

Or the tuba.

God forbid! But they do, because it's what calls them. It's mystical how you come to the sound that defines you. Your instrument and sound reflect your personality. If they don't, you're not reaching deep enough.

Another mystical thing is that one guitarist

"I loved Jimi's Strat tone, and I loved the acoustic honesty of John Hurt, and I wanted to get both sounds at the same time."

can play a *G* chord and stand the hairs up on your neck, while another will hit a *G* and you go, "Well, it's a *G*." Why is that? How can Bob Marley, Elvis Costello, Bob Dylan, Neil Young—or Richard Ashcroft from the Verve, for that matter—get so much soul out of a *G* chord? Or how can one guitarist burn up and down the fretboard and leave your jaw dragging on the floor, while another does the same thing and puts you to sleep?

What puts your jaw on the floor?

I heard a Mississippi John Hurt record at a very important time in my life—right after high school. This was at the music store. I recognized the song—"Stagolee"—from my childhood, but this time when I heard it, I stood there transfixed. It was at that very moment that I knew I'd be playing guitar for the rest of my life—no matter what. He does this double-thumb picking that I felt compelled to learn. That night, I locked up the shop and swore I was not going to leave until I'd worked it out. I left at 5 a.m. the next morning, able to fingerpick the song.

As far as lap slide, David Lindley is my strongest influence, hands down. For me, he's the greatest living slide player. We were neighbors, and I grew up listening to him and watching him closely. His daughter Roseanne and I are the same age, and we grew up the best of friends. Our families would go to his concerts all over the place.

In terms of records? Jimi Hendrix, David Lindley, Blind Willie Johnson, Mississippi John Hurt, and Warren Haynes from Gov't Mule—I need them all in my life at least weekly.

Did you start with regular roundneck bottleneck guitar before making the transition to

ROOTS RADICAL

squareneck lap slide?

I went from folk fingerpicking—Mississippi John Hurt meets Leo Kottke—to playing bottleneck. I listened to Blind Willie Johnson, Blind Willie McTell, Robert Johnson, and Bukka White,

and got my hands on every video and CD I could find. I got into lap slide through Mike McLellan—an amazing musician who plays fiddle, lap slide, banjo, dulcimer, and autoharp. He's the one who inspired Lindley to play.

Mike heard me playing bottleneck and said, "What you're doing would translate really well to lap slide," and then loaned me his National Tricone. I was listening to a lot of Blind Willie Johnson at the time, and I think he was playing some songs on his lap. I know there's no proof of that, but when I started translating the Blind Willie songs I was working on—"God Don't Never Change," "Praise God I'm Satisfied," and "Nobody's Fault but Mine"—to lap guitar, I was able to get closer to what he was doing.

I could never get to my own voice playing bottleneck, but when I started playing lap slide, I finally found it. At that point, there was no turning back. I was about 19, and I spent the next few years woodshedding my ass off—hours and hours and hours.

What led you from a Tricone resonator to an all-wood Weissenborn?

I love Nationals and Dobros, but they only sound like Nationals and Dobros. I had so many other sounds in my head and my heart, that I had to go to them. The Weissenborn offered me a fuller range of acoustic sounds and it was the most musically fulfilling instrument I'd ever held in my hands. Not only does a Weissenborn give you wooden tones, but if you sting it right, it yields a National or Dobro flavor. Once I got to the Weissenborn by way of the National, all of a sudden I started writing music.

Speaking of songs, in five years you've recorded four albums containing mostly original music. Given your active touring schedule, when do you write?

During soundchecks, in hotel rooms on the road, or late nights at home. As my wife will attest, pretty much four nights a week I don't go to bed until the sun comes up. And now with kids, I have to wake up only a few hours later. I don't have a choice—I get nervous when days go by, and I don't work on a song. Songwriting is what keeps me sane. It's what excites me about life and brings me the greatest joy—outside of my family and dearest friends. I don't have a lot of outside interests. My hobbies are guitar, writing songs, and looking at life in a way that can reflect into my songwriting.

Your lyrics have a '60s sensibility—social issues figure in many of your songs.

People say you are what you eat, but for musicians, you are what you *hear*. My grandfather was friends with Pete Seeger, and I heard a lot of Bob Dylan and Tim Hardin when I was young. We were raised with that hardcore social consciousness—clearly defined social rights and wrongs. We were taught to not be cynical, but to be critical—and to distinguish between the two—and to do what you can to make where you are a better place for you and those around you.

Do you keep a song in your head while you're working on it, or do you record your ideas as they develop?

I use a little tape recorder—that's my "home studio." There's an acoustic version of every song I've written somewhere on cassette.

Do you have any advice for guitarists?

Write songs! Sit down and dig deep inside the scariest and most enlightened part of your soul, and don't ever allow yourself to be limited by yourself. Don't accept boundaries. Listen to music that's outside your area of interest, and write in as many different styles as possible, because the world *never* has enough good songs. ■

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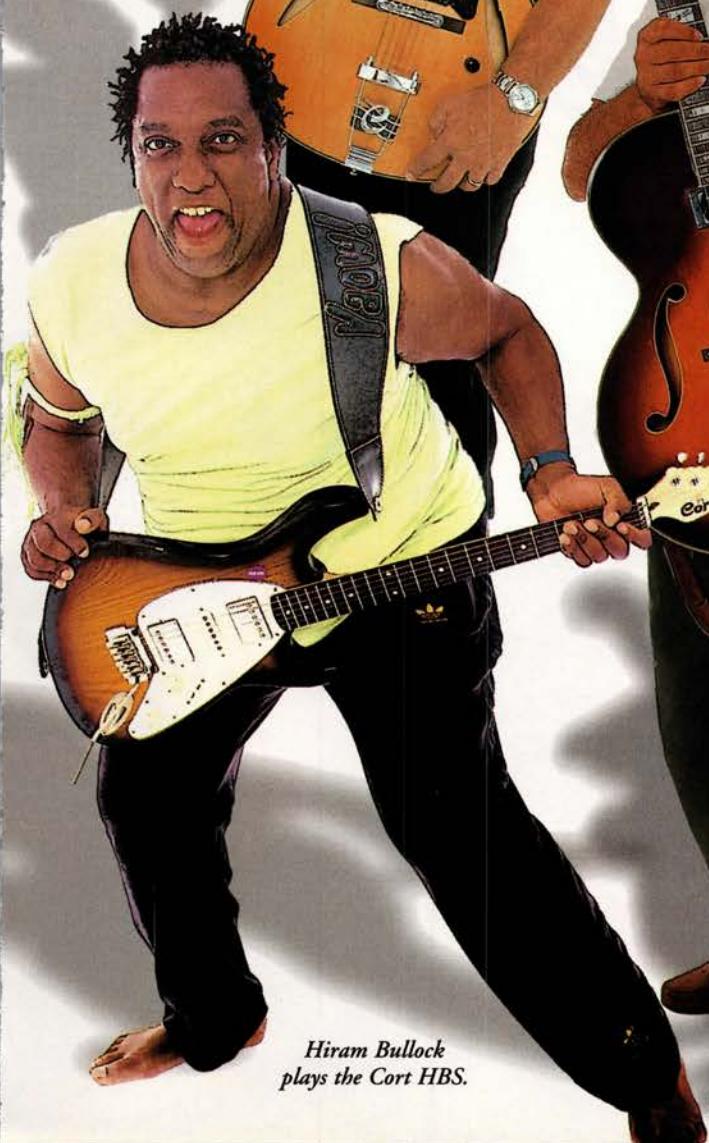
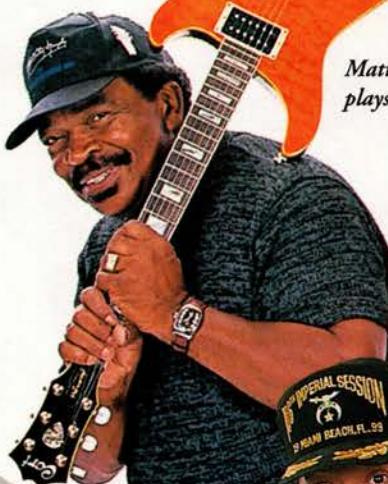
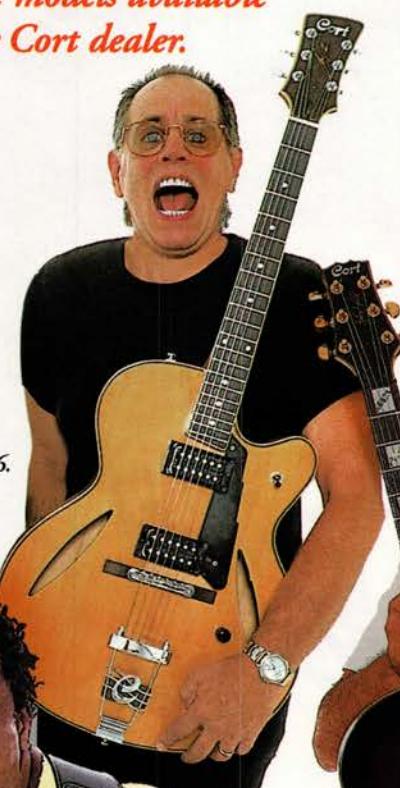
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"An individual's tone
comes from the elbow
down, all the way
through the hands."

—Ben Harper



LAP

EXPLORE BEN HARPER'S RIFFS & TECHNIQUES

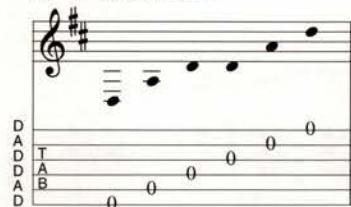
BY ANDY ELLIS

Like many slide guitarists, Ben Harper plays in a number of tunings, but one stands out as his favorite. "I call it DADDAD, and it comes from open-D tuning," he explains. "Here's open D—D, A, D, F#, A, D [Ex. 1a]. To get DADDAD, just drop the third string from F# to D." As Ex. 1b illustrates, this yields a unison between the third and fourth strings, and creates two sets of power chords—one on

Ex. 1a open D tuning



Ex. 1b DADDAD tuning



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANNY CLINCH

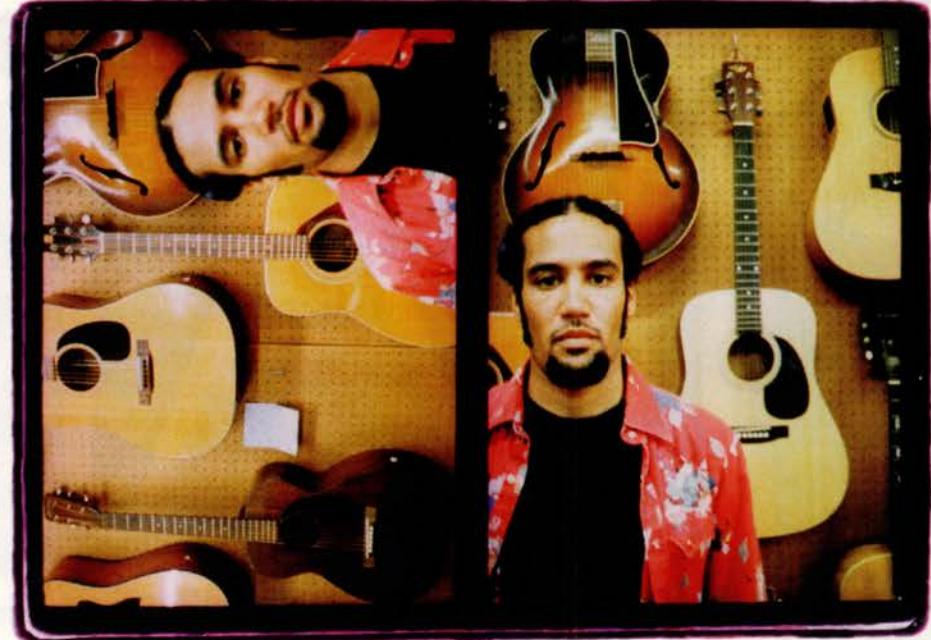
LAP DANCING

the bottom three strings, the other on the top three strings.

Whip it good. "When I play riffs in open D," says Harper, "too often the F# worms itself into chords and gets in the way. But when you tune that string down, you get a powerful chord that works all the way up the neck. 'Whipping Boy' is in DADDAD." Harper plays the song's main riff, which features chords on the sixth, fifth, and fourth strings (Ex. 2). "If you accidentally strum the third string," he elaborates, "you simply reinforce the bottom notes instead of getting that mandatory major sound."

To appreciate Harper's point, first learn Ex. 2 as written, then raise the third string to F# and play the riff again. Unless you're *extremely* careful, you'll find that each chord's 3 (which now resides on the third string) will intrude on the riff. Yuck—parallel major chords. Even if you don't pick the third string, your bar is likely to set it into motion when you add vibrato to a chord.

Most open tunings contain a major or minor third, and therefore produce a major or minor chord when you strum all the strings. Harper's DADDAD tuning has a neutral sound that's nei-



ther major nor minor. "You can take it either way," he concurs. "I've listened to Blind Willie Johnson for many hours, and I think he sometimes used this tuning."

Barwork. Ex. 2 also reveals Harper's fondness for pull-offs and hammer-ons. A clean pull-off requires a light touch. Simply *lift* the bar off the strings—don't drag it—and you'll hear the open strings ring. You can hammer a bit more vigorously, depending on how rude you want to sound. Try a delicate hammer in bar 1 (beat four) and a more slammin' hammer going into bar 2.

Watch the staccato marks in bar 3—the goal is to make each of the five power chords distinct from the others. There are two ways to create

a staccato chord: You can momentarily lift the bar off the strings and let your behind-the-bar fingers act as a damper, or you can quickly mute the strings with your picking-hand fingertips before you pluck the next chord. You may find that a combination of these two approaches works best.

Picking-hand technique. Many of Harper's riffs, including Ex. 2, lend themselves to both strumming and picking. For starters, stroke the three-note chords with your thumb, and pick the single notes with your index or middle finger. Then try plucking the chords using thumb, index, and middle fingers. Strumming lap-guitar chords yields singing, rhythmic stabs while

Ex. 2

$\text{♩} = 72-84$

DADDAD tuning

Ex. 3

$\text{♩} = 80-92$

DADDAD tuning

plucking offers more precise control over dynamics and muting.

Rather than use fingerpicks, Harper plucks with his fingertips, using his thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers. "For me," he says, "picks take away the notes' warmth. But then you hear David Lindley, and right away that shoots down my theory. I've heard guitarists put on fingerpicks and just stun you, but I've also heard players sound so brittle. I feel closer to the instrument with bare fingers, but I shredded my fingertips before I got used to it."

The perfect grind. "In *DADDAD*, you can play chords on the top strings too," Harper remarks, while playing a driving riff from "Ground on Down" (Ex. 3). Notice that there are only two picking-hand attacks in this passage—the other attacks are all hammers and pulls. Pluck only the riff's first and third sixteenth notes, and let your bar do the rest. To approximate the stinging sound Harper gets on disc, vigorously strum and hammer the strings.

Harper uses half-step slides (frets 4-5 and 10-11) to create chromatic color and build momentum through tension and release. In this phrase, the octaves (strings three and one) evoke a chimey 12-string.

Less is more. Harper takes chromatic movement even further in "Less." "It's all pulls and hammers," he says, playing Ex. 4a. On the record, his furious distortion creates soaring sustain—if you can replicate *that* tone, you won't need to pick the strings at all. Hammer the opening *E*5, the *B4*5 in bar 2, and the first *F*5 in bar 3.

Ex. 4a

♩ = 108-116

DADDAD tuning

E5

* Hammer-on w/ slide bar

Ex. 4b

✓ = 108-116

DADDAD tuning

E

The Poor Man's Weissborn



on't have a Weissenborn handy? Join the club—these vintage, acoustic lap guitars are hard to come by. And if you do find one, you'll probably pay dearly. "You used to see them for \$50, but those days are gone," says Ben Harper. Luckily, budding lap guitarists have other options.

You can, of course, buy a new Weissenborn-style instrument (Bear Creek is one of several companies making cool hollow-neck retros). But if you're on a tight budget—or simply want to investigate acoustic lap guitar before committing the rupees for a dedicated instrument—you can easily convert a flat-top for lap playing.

First, buy a "Dobro nut" (an arched piece of metal that sits over a standard nut and comes with built-in string grooves) and a saddle blank that's tall enough to raise your strings a 1/4" to 1/2" off the fretboard. You should be able to find both of these items at a well-stocked music store for under \$10. Slacken your strings, slip on the Dobro nut, swap saddles, retune, and you're done.

Got a beater acoustic with a warped neck? Convert it! My favorite choice, however, is the inexpensive Baby Taylor. Its small, light body is easy to hold on your lap. Because it's a short-scale instrument, you won't get the booming bottom of a dreadnought or jumbo, but the Baby's natural voice—a bit high and compressed—is well suited to lap riffing. Strung with acoustic lights (.012-.052), the Baby Taylor will handle several lap tunings. To explore Harper's DADDAD power-chord tuning, raise it a whole-step (E, B, E, E, B, E). Alternatively, try Dobro open-G tuning (G, B, D, G, B, D) or open-E (E, B, E, G#, B, E). —AE

- AE

Pull-off to the open strings (beat two in bars 1 and 2) and slide up or down into everything else. Aim for a fluid, legato grind.

Ex. 4b is a second riff from "Less." For an especially wicked sound, strum the chords with

your thumb. As you swing across the bottom three strings, occasionally catch the unison between the third and fourth strings. This interval is never perfectly in tune, so the riff's top voice will stand out. Harper often takes advantage of



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LAP DANCING

this natural chorusing. "The third string is a thinner gauge, so it's a little out. When I accidentally hit it with the fourth string, the note goes 'voom.'"

In bar 2, pay attention to the pull-off (and of beat one) and hammer-on (beat two), add quivering vibrato to the quarter-note chords, and keep the power-chord slides in tempo. As in the previous example, this riff calls for a grinding tone.

Double-thumbing. "If you want to play slide guitar," says Harper, "it's helpful to know how

Ex. 5a

open D tuning

Ex. 5b

Freely
open D tuning

Ex. 6a

$\text{♩} = 72-92$
EBEEBE tuning

"I could never get to my own voice playing bottleneck, but when I started playing lap slide, I finally found it."

to fingerpick. The pickers I love alternate bass strings with their thumb. You could set your watch by Taj Mahal's thumb—it's that steady. I call this double-thumbing." To demonstrate, Harper plays Ex. 5a. "It's just *dum-cha-dum-cha*—you're playing a bass part. Elizabeth Cotten and Mississippi John Hurt built their picking patterns around double-thumbing."

Once you establish a steady quarter-note bass, it's time to add the melodic component. Ex. 5b is distilled from several passages Harper played to demonstrate melody with alternating bass-string accompaniment.

This is tricky: You have to allow the open bass strings to ring while playing the melody with the bar on the top string. To do this, arch your hand over the fretboard and place the tip of the bar on the first string. Once you find the correct angle, you'll be able to glide along the top string without interfering with the sustaining bass notes.

The syncopation in bar 1 (beats two and three) is typical of Piedmont blues—steady bass with offset melody. Pluck the upstemmed notes

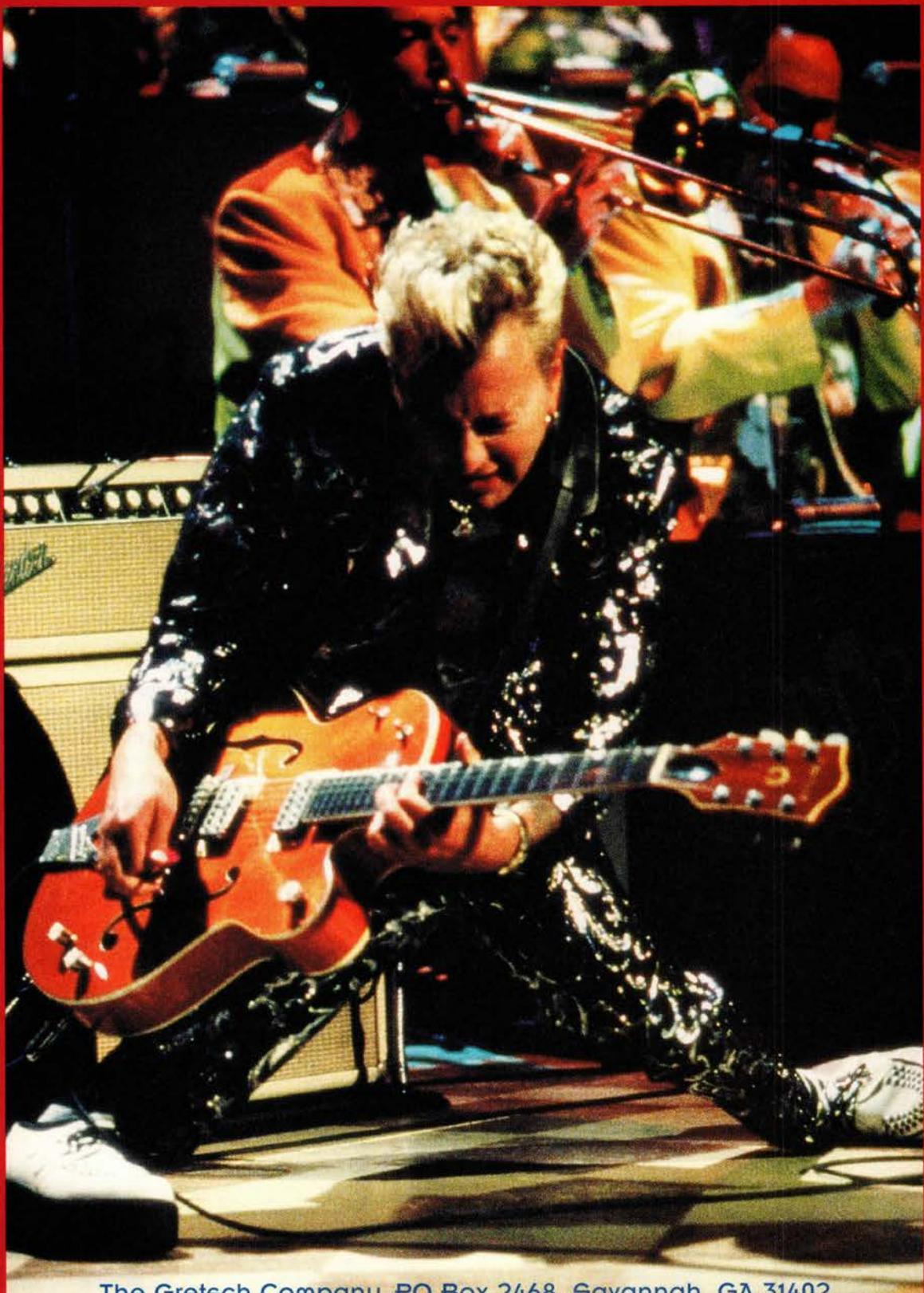
with your index and middle fingers, and strike the downstemmed bass notes with your thumb.

This phrase is in open-D tuning. "I'll throw the F# in there for writing more quiet songs," Harper allows. "Pleasure and Pain" is in open D." In Ex. 5b, the difference between open D and DADDAD is only apparent in the final bar, when you strum those six-note major chords.

Crazed unisons. The main riff from "Forgiven" (Ex. 6a) is in Harper's DADDAD tuning, but up a whole-step (E, B, E, E, B, E). "This is another one that wouldn't work with a major tuning," Harper explains, as he demonstrates the subtle barwork. The phrase features a melody played on the third string against the droning fourth string. As in the previous example, you need to arch your hand and select notes with the tip, rather than the side of your bar. The unisons add a dulcimer-like twang, and the offbeat E pedal-tones propel the groove forward. As before, use your fingers to pick the upstemmed notes, and your thumb on the downstemmed notes.

"Forgiven" ends with the unison-rich figure in Ex. 6b. Notice how one theme—which Harper

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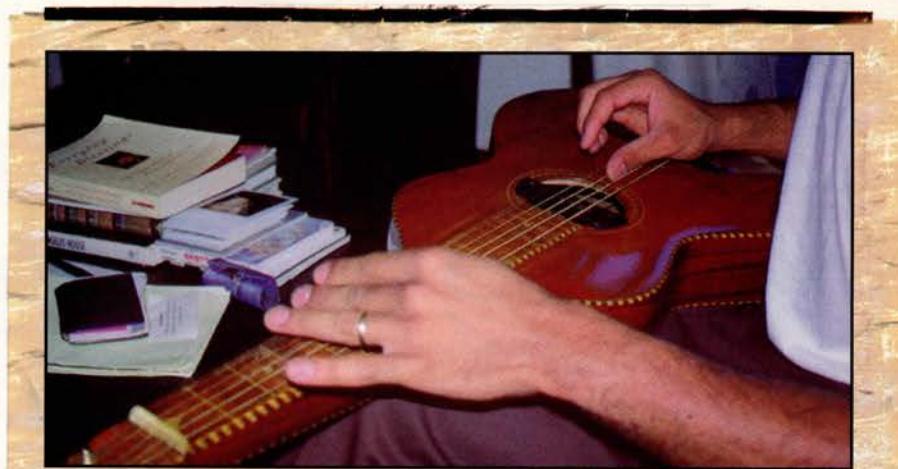
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LAP DANCING

plays on double-E middle strings—repeats in each measure against a descending bass line. Don't pick or hammer the lowest note in measures 1, 2, and 3—just let the your bar "scrub" it out as you add vibrato to the neighboring fifth string. Your bar actually *bows* the sixth string, causing it to come alive. Harper's playing is full of these delightful ghosted notes.

This riff has it all: nimble barwork with slides, hammers, and pulls; independent thumb-and-finger picking action; unison strings; and trance-inducing repetition. See how the melody anticipates each new measure by an eighth-note? Start slowly until you feel the elliptical rhythm in your bones, then gradually wind up to speed. On "Forgiven," Harper plays this hypnotic line over a throbbing, sixteenth-note bass guitar and snappy backbeats.

Shake that thing. "Vibrato is what separates slide players," asserts Harper. "There's a place for a nervous vibrato, but it gets very unmusical if you use it *all* the time. I find there are three



Harper keeps his bar-hand 4th finger hovering off the strings. "You're more agile if you can move around without having to drag dead weight behind the bar," he says. He also favors a bare-fingers picking technique derived from such folk-blues guitarists as Mississippi John Hurt and Elizabeth Cotten.

crucial vibratos—a slow one, a nervous one, and one in between. And then there's just holding a note with your slide—for that, you have to be confident about your intonation."

To illustrate, Harper plays variations on Ex. 7. As you repeat the phrase, try mixing different vibrato speeds. For instance, quickly wiggle the unison-fortified G5 power chord, and slowly shake the sustained C. Then try sliding into these notes without vibrato. In bar 2, notice how a ghosted F appears below C. As in Ex. 6b, use your bar to bow this bottom note.

Finding your voice. "It's not easy to sound like somebody else," concludes Harper, "but it's even harder to sound like yourself. Every note has been played, so you've got to really dig deep to find your voice. It's so important to listen to other styles and try to embody them in your music—even in a small way. Steve Vai and Neil Young play the same freakin' six strings, yet they come from such different places. That's what keeps guitar exciting for me, and that's what has made it the most important instrument of this century."

Ex. 6b

$\text{♩} = 72-92$
EBEEBE tuning

w/ slide and dist.

* Hammer-on w/ slide bar.

Ex. 7

$\text{♩} = 108-132$
DADDAD tuning

w/ slide

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Repairs

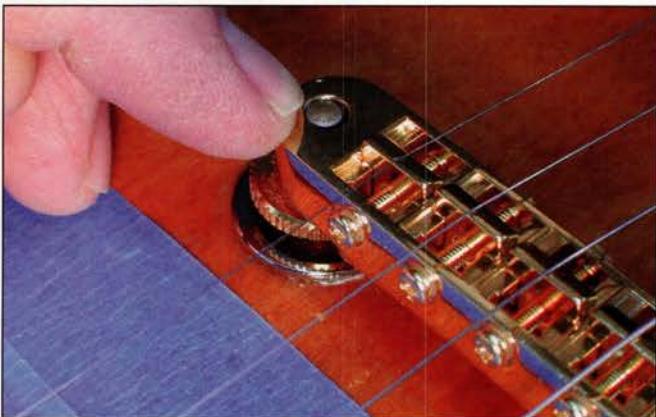
Back in the Saddle

By Dan Erlewine

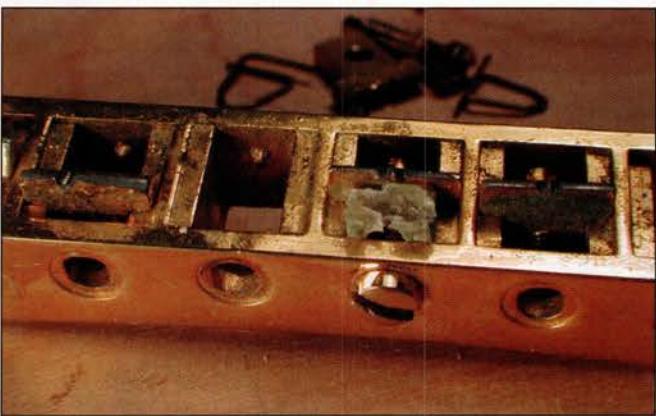
How do owners of Gibson guitars equipped with Schaller-made, Nashville Tune-o-matic bridges remove the bridge saddles if they're worn and need replacing? Well, it's easy if you have a couple of small flat-bladed screwdrivers.

Here's what I did when a 1980 Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion was sent to me for a refret, a new nut, and a setup. As I checked out the guitar, I also discovered that the bridge was funky—the body of the bridge was in decent shape, but the saddles definitely needed to be replaced. I prefer blank saddles rather than pre-cut units for this type of job, and as I had to order replacements from Gibson USA, the refret and nut replacement had to be done using a "surrogate" bridge. ■

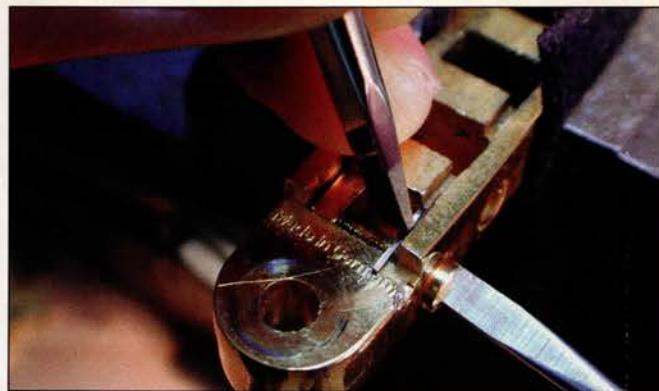
Dan Erlewine works full-time researching and developing new products at Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply in Athens, Ohio. In his spare time, Erlewine repairs guitars in his own shop, serving players nationwide. He also teaches guitar repair, and can be seen in his series of how-to videos. Contact Erlewine at erlewine@stewmac.com.



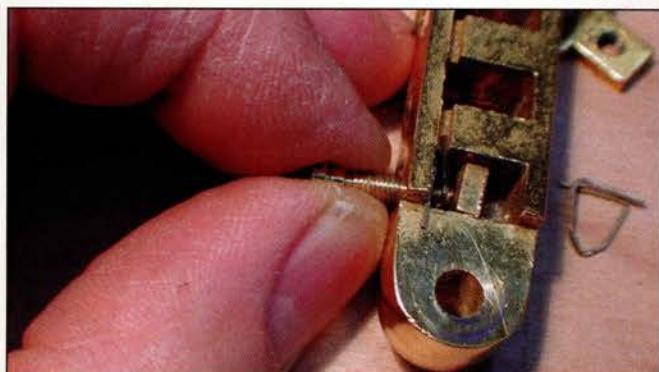
A Stew-Mac 1511-G replacement bridge stood in for the original until the new saddles arrived.



Most of the old saddles had more than one string slot, and wax had been crammed down onto the screws—perhaps to keep the saddles from vibrating or moving.



To remove the saddle screw, I adjusted the saddle all the way against the back wall. Then I pressed down on the retainer clip from the backside, simultaneously using a second screwdriver to back out the screw. Don't try this in your lap!



Once freed from the clip, the screw can be removed, and the clip and saddle will simply drop out. Now the bridge body can be thoroughly cleaned.



Here's the set of new saddle blanks ready to be notched and fit.



I installed the new saddles by reversing the removal process. When you do this repair, be sure to check that the retainer clip has dropped into the screw's groove. If it hasn't, push it in with a small screwdriver.

GODSMACK

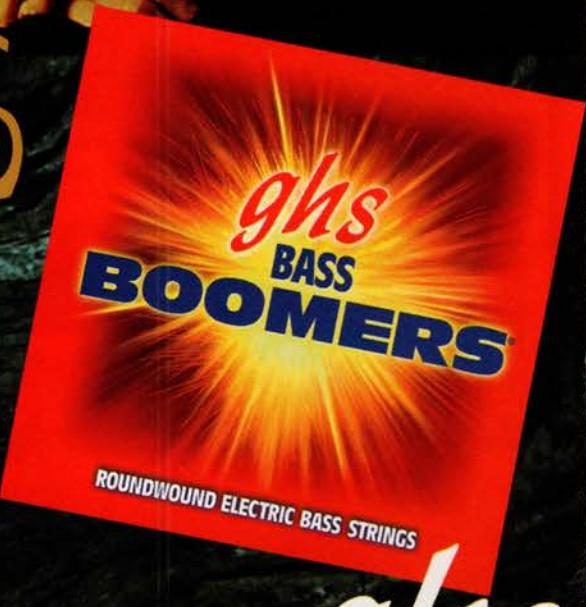
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photo by Andrew MacNaughton



**Albert King and
Stevie Ray Vaughan**
In Session

Superstar jam sessions are typically about as exciting as day-old bread, but this December 6, 1983, studio performance by blues legends Albert King and Stevie Ray Vaughan is a rare exception. King apparently couldn't recall who Vaughan was as he walked into the studios of CHCH (an independent television station in Hamilton, Ontario). However, he quickly recog-

nized the 29-year-old Texan as "little Stevie," the kid that used to show up—and occasionally sit in—at King's gigs in Austin.

Things had changed, of course, and King surely knew that the tables were turned. Vaughan's blazing, Albert King-inspired licks were all over David Bowie's mega hit "Let's Dance," and the young guitarist was now a rising star. But if King felt like he'd just walked into the guitar duel of his life, he did his best to downplay it. After a wailing rendition of "Call It Stormy Monday," it's hugs and kisses as King exclaims, "Yeah, just like old times, Stevie. I wouldn't have missed this for nothin' in the world." He then recalls his first meeting with Vaughan, remembering him as "a

little skinny fellow," and adding that he knew he had the makings to become a "good fiddler."

Throughout the 11-song disc, King summons his lead guitar powers with hurricane force, regularly switching on a phase shifter to add chewy texture to his ten-ton bends. But King also plays a lot of cool rhythm parts—something he certainly *wouldn't* have done for just anyone. You can really hear him grooving on "Pride and Joy" (which King calls "that fast thing—that rap thing"), adding horn-like jabs at every turn.

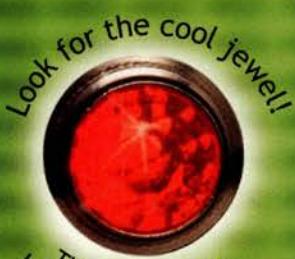
Clearly in charge of the proceedings, King treats Vaughan like a son, calling out the songs (mostly his own) and never hesitating to give the younger guitarist advice,

including this gem: "Stevie, I know you can do it. You're already pretty good, but you're going to be better."

On "Blues at Sunrise," King urges Vaughan to play like Jimi Hendrix. Stevie responds with a volley of riffs, but here and elsewhere he also shows remarkable restraint, respectfully reigning in his awesome abilities in deference to the elder bluesman. King eventually breaks a string, and he turns this inconvenience into an opportunity to talk about being ready to "turn it over" to Vaughan. "I don't believe that," replies Stevie. (Ironically, the 60-year-old King would outlive Vaughan by some 16 months, continuing to record and tour until his death on

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Reviews

December 21, 1992.)

The dialog between King and Vaughan is a testament to the deep respect the two men had for each other, but *In Session* also stands out for its sheer abundance of great guitar playing. The subtle head-cutting dynamic (probably more on King's part than Vaughan's) creates an environment where both guitarists are supportive, yet willing and able to test each other's mettle. Hearing Vaughan's fierce precision in one chorus and King's bare-knuckled response in the next is a rare treat—and one that only those fortunate enough to have seen the two in clubs around Austin during the late '70s could have experienced. **Stax.**

—ART THOMPSON

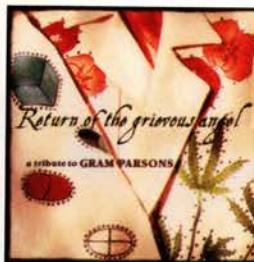
Various Artists

The Gypsy Road

Like *Latcho Drom*, Tony Gatlif's astonishing 1993 documentary about Gypsy music and dance, this compilation retraces

the Gypsy migration from India to Iberia. As in that film, performance after startling performance reveals how the musical vision of one culture helped shape the music of two continents. Guitar is a star, of course, and not only in its familiar flamenco and Django-jazz roles. In fact, some of the Asian and Eastern European performances here make one suspect that key aspects of those Western European styles originated far to the East. Equally fascinating are several cuts from international "all star" groups that assemble players from throughout the Gypsy diaspora. Along the way, we hear nylon- and steel-string guitars, Russian 7-string, and a variety of fretted and unfretted lutes. Even the few tracks without guitar convey how much the Gypsy guitar tradition owes to bowed instruments and the voice. This stunning collection abounds with singing and playing of almost unfathomable depth.

And even if it didn't, it would be worth acquiring just for Taraf de Haïdouks' "Duba Duba . . . Si Hora," a swaggering rave-up that answers the perennial musical question, "What if rockabilly had started in Romania?" **Alula.** —JG



Various Artists

Return of the Grievous Angel: A Tribute to Gram Parsons

Songwriter Gram Parsons gained notoriety when he joined the Byrds in 1968, sending the group head-first into country music. The result was the landmark album *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. Par-

sons then formed the Flying Burrito Brothers, and later recorded two solo albums (*G.P.*, and *Grievous Angel*) before his death in 1973. For *Return of the Grievous Angel*, artists such as the Mavericks, Cowboy Junkies, Gillian Welch, and Elvis Costello show how far Parsons' shadow has been cast in the country and rock genres.

Emmylou Harris, a former member of Parsons' backup band, appears three times on *Return of the Grievous Angel*. She shows up on duets with Beck and Sheryl Crow, as well as teaming with the Pretenders for a stellar performance of "She." Harris and Chrissie Hynde trade verses and harmonize elegantly while tremolo-drenched guitars create a haunting backdrop.

Alternative darlings Evan Dando and Julianna Hatfield contribute one of the album's highlights with their reading of "\$1,000 Wedding." The track features Greg Liesz on rhythm guitar—who also makes an

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REVIEWS

appearance on pedal steel for the Crow/Harris version of "Juanita" and plays lap steel and mandolin behind Lucinda Williams and David Crosby on "Return of the Grievous Angel." Former Byrd and Burrito Brother Chris Hillman teams with country renegade Steve Earle on the honky-tonking "High Fashion Queen," which features a great solo from Hellecaster John Jorgenson. Finally, a tribute album that leaves you feeling satisfied. Almo Sounds.

chimey electric tones abound, beautifully supporting Clayton's lilting vocal melodies. The blending of acoustic and electric guitars is stellar throughout, and the comparative lack of distorted sounds make them that much more effective when Clayton does turn on the fuzz.

In fact, such tonal "cameos" are a recurring motif on *Limb*. The album's opener, "Collide," begins with an intriguing backwards guitar that implodes into the tune's main rhythm hook, but is never heard again. Clayton's Theremin-like slide work also slips into a few songs, and almost every song features understated guitar melodies that sneak in and out of the mix.

Comparisons to Liverpool's famous foursome are inevitable—especially as Clayton plays guitar in Julian Lennon's band—but Clayton's tunes are not overtly Beatle-esque. While some of the guitars and an occasional vocal might remind you of the Fab Four, the most obvious cop on *Limb* is the Pink Floyd-inspired "Shallow World." Ultimatum.

—MB

Justin Clayton

Limb

In a world of breakneck tempos, vicious distorted guitars, and end-of-the-world drums, *Limb*—the debut offering from Liverpool's Justin Clayton—is a mellow, hypnotic oasis. Sparkling arpeggios, gorgeous acoustic timbres, and

Café Tacuba

Revés/Yo Soy

With their fourth album, Café Tacuba prove themselves to be not only the most fascinating export from Mexico City's thriving rock scene, but also one of the most compelling bands on the planet. They make progressive rock in the

STEREO OR MONO: FIVE MOD



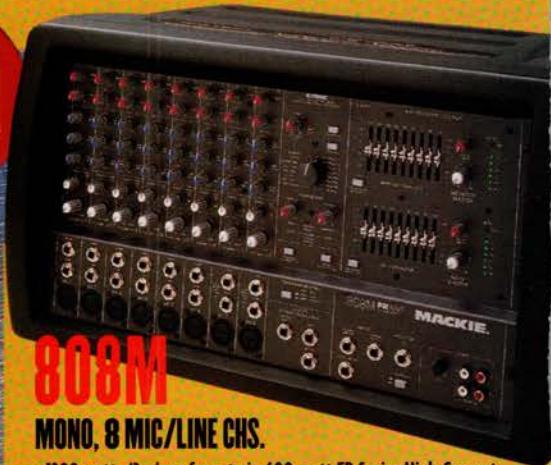
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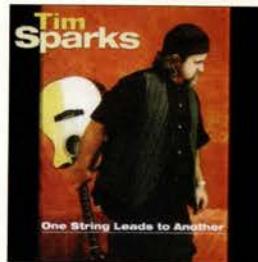
LOUD!

finest sense of the word: open-ended, ambitious, and constantly surprising—in short, the exact opposite of the cannibalistic recycling of today's *norteamericano* rock. This is quite literally a two-disc set—*Revés* is an ambitious and abstract instrumental suite, while *Yo Soy* is a ravishing pop disc. The unifying factor is the restlessly creative guitar work of Joselo Rangel, a true sound-sculptor whose ingeniously layered parts and high-contrast signal processing add texture and depth to the group's tuneful, yet subversive sound. Café Tacuba don't sound like Talking Heads, but they attain that group's unlikely balance of highbrow concept and down-home pop satisfaction. Other points of reference—in spirit, if not specific sound—are Beck, the Beatles, Radiohead, mid-period Pink Floyd, and Brazil's *tropicalistas*. A resounding triumph of brainy, album-oriented rock. **Warner Bros.**

Tim Sparks

One String Leads to Another

A fingerstyle wizard, Tim Sparks draws from many musical traditions on *One String Leads to Another*. Strains of Celtic, country blues, ragtime, Appalachian, Turkish, Indian, and Italian melodies all find their way into Sparks' solo originals. It takes a skilled *musician*—as opposed to guitarist—to weave such diverse rhythmic and harmonic threads into whole



cloth, yet Sparks makes it happen.

Whether thumbing a bass-note drone against bluesy double-stops and sitar-like bends, plucking sheets of rippling arpeggios, or playing counterpoint lines at breakneck speed, Sparks is remarkably adventurous—and that's what separates him from the pack. There are many skilled solo-acoustic guitarists making CDs today, but few can match Sparks' verve and intensity. On this live and natural-sounding record, we hear the workings of a restless, probing mind, rather than a series of refined techniques.

—AF

Various Artists

Doob Doob O' Rama: Film Songs from Bollywood

There are basically two kinds of recorded music in India: classical (the improvised ragas played on sitars, sarods, and such) and movie

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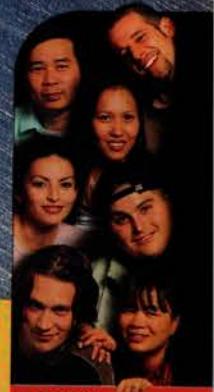
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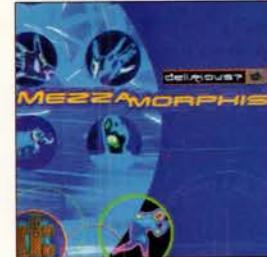
music. In India, film and pop songs are inextricably linked, and lip-syncing movie idols have defined the medium since the 1930s. It's difficult to summarize the style in musical terms since composers routinely pilfer whatever's hot in Hollywood and international pop. But since this collection seems to emphasize tracks from the '60s and '70s (annotation is scant), you get tons of psychotronic electric guitar heavily informed by the era's spy flicks, cop operas, and spaghetti westerns. If you like Ventures-style twang, 007 chromaticism, Morricone reverb, misguided psychedelia, and endearingly jerky rhythm guitar, you'll love it here amidst seas of wailing Hindi vocals, roiling percussion, and downright hallucinogenic production. This isn't the only cool Indi-pop compilation: *Dance Raja Dance* [Luaka Bop], *Bombay the Hard Way* [Motel], and *Golden Voices from the Silver Screen* [Globestyle] are also terrific. But *Doob* boasts the most non-stop 6-string action.

Normal Records. —JG

Delirious?

Mezzamorphis

With a whacked name and a CD cover that seems to promise techno or groove music, Delirious? could benefit from a few rounds with a marketing consultant. But there's no



confusion about the spirited, guitar-propelled pop of *Mezzamorphis*. The CD's first track, "The Mezzanine Floor," immediately establishes the band's focus on shifting soundscapes—a thrilling production dynamic that employs distorted riffs, phase-shifted counterpoint lines, nylon-string melodies, tremoloed rhythmic punctuations, ham-handed power chords, and soaring leads to intensify (or cool out) song sections.

There's a definitive Radiohead vibe—and the songs do exhibit a fair amount of loops and digital editing—but the performances of guitarists Stuart Garrard and Martin Smith are so hip, tough, and omnipotent that you could probably slip on *Mezzamorphis*' heavier tunes at a biker bash without getting your butt kicked. And home recordists of all stripes should be inspired by the fact Delirious? recorded and produced this textural marvel all by themselves. *Furious?* / Virgin. —MM

THIS -



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Blue Angel by Eric Bowman ©1999

Digital Dynasty

Five New Generation Modeling Amps

By Art Thompson

Recent breakthroughs in digital amplification are forcing guitarists to consider how one of these computerized combos might figure into their tone schemes. Heck, with all those classic-amp simulations and onboard DSP, why even bother with a one-trick-pony tube amp? Even the argument that digital amps are difficult to use no longer holds much water. For the most part, gone are the intimidating interfaces that turned many guitarists away from the first generation of modeling amps. Knob-based front panels now let you quickly and easily dial in a vast ar-

ray of amp and effects textures, set delay times and modulation rates, and store customized presets. It has reached the point where digital amplifiers are hardly more challenging to use than some multi-channel tube amps.

But not *everything* in digital land is rosy. Tube dynamics and harmonic complexity still suffer in

Snapshot

Five digital amps—Crate's DX-212 (\$880), Johnson's JT50 (\$649), Line 6's Spider 112 (\$599), Rocktron's RepliTone (\$899), and Yamaha's DG80-112 (\$999)—represent the cutting edge of tube-modeling technology. The Rocktron RepliTone and Yamaha DG80-112 receive Editors' Pick Awards.

some designs, and most of the current crop incorporate noise gates to suppress considerable hiss.

(Only the Yamaha DG80-112 is quiet enough to operate *sans* noise reduction.) Weight is another issue.



Crate DX-212

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POWER: 50 watts x 2
SPEAKERS: two 12" Eminence
FACTORY PRESETS: 10
USER PRESETS:
10 (100 with optional Floor Controller)
EFFECTS LOOP: yes
MIDI CAPABILITY: preset select
HEADPHONE OUT: yes
DIRECT OUT: no
EXTENSION SPEAKER JACK: no
WEIGHT: 57 lbs
OPTIONS: DXFC Foot Controller (\$200)

Johnson JT50 →

PRICE: \$649
POWER: 50 watts
SPEAKERS: one 12" Eminence
FACTORY PRESETS: 21
USER PRESETS: 21
EFFECTS LOOP: yes
MIDI CAPABILITY: none
HEADPHONE OUT: yes
DIRECT OUT: 1/4" (with speaker simulation)
EXTENSION SPEAKER JACK: no
WEIGHT: 43 lbs
OPTIONS: JT3 Footswitch (\$49), J8 Foot Controller (\$199)



Digital amps are often as cumbersome to tote around as tube amps of equal wattage. And speaking of power, it's not uncommon for a tube 30-watter to slice through drums and bass *way* better than a digital amp with twice the power.

Of course, any disadvantages must be weighed against the fact that digital amps pack *acres* of tones compared to their tube-powered brethren. And if you're the type of player who prefers hav-

ing your effects built-in rather than bolted into a rack—or tacked to a scrap of plywood—a digital combo is a tidy and efficient package.

These five amps from Crate, Johnson, Line 6, Rocktron, and Yamaha represent the cutting edge of modeling technology. Each is a fine statement of how computer technology can be harnessed for groovy guitar sounds, but as you'll see, not all digital amps are created equal.

We tested these amps using a variety of guitars, including a PRS McCarty, a '61 Gibson Les Paul Junior and a '78 Les Paul, a Hamer Newport, and various reissue Strats and Teles.

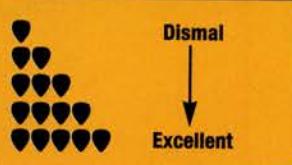
Crate DX-212

Amp models. Ampeg VL (Ampeg VL-501), Vintage Club (Crate VC-60), Blue Voodoo (Crate BV-60), Flexwave, (Crate GX-140C), Clean (Crate GX-140C), Acoustic (Boss

AC-1 Acoustic Simulator), Fuzzbox (Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face), Large Tweed (Fender 5F6-A Bassman), Studio Tweed (Fender 5E3 Deluxe), Black Face (Fender AA763 Deluxe Reverb), High Power (Hiwatt DR), 60s Era UK (Marshall 1959), 70s Era UK (Marshall JCM 800), Tube Rectifier (Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier), Calif Mod (Mesa/Boogie MK IIC+), Top Mount (Vox AC30).

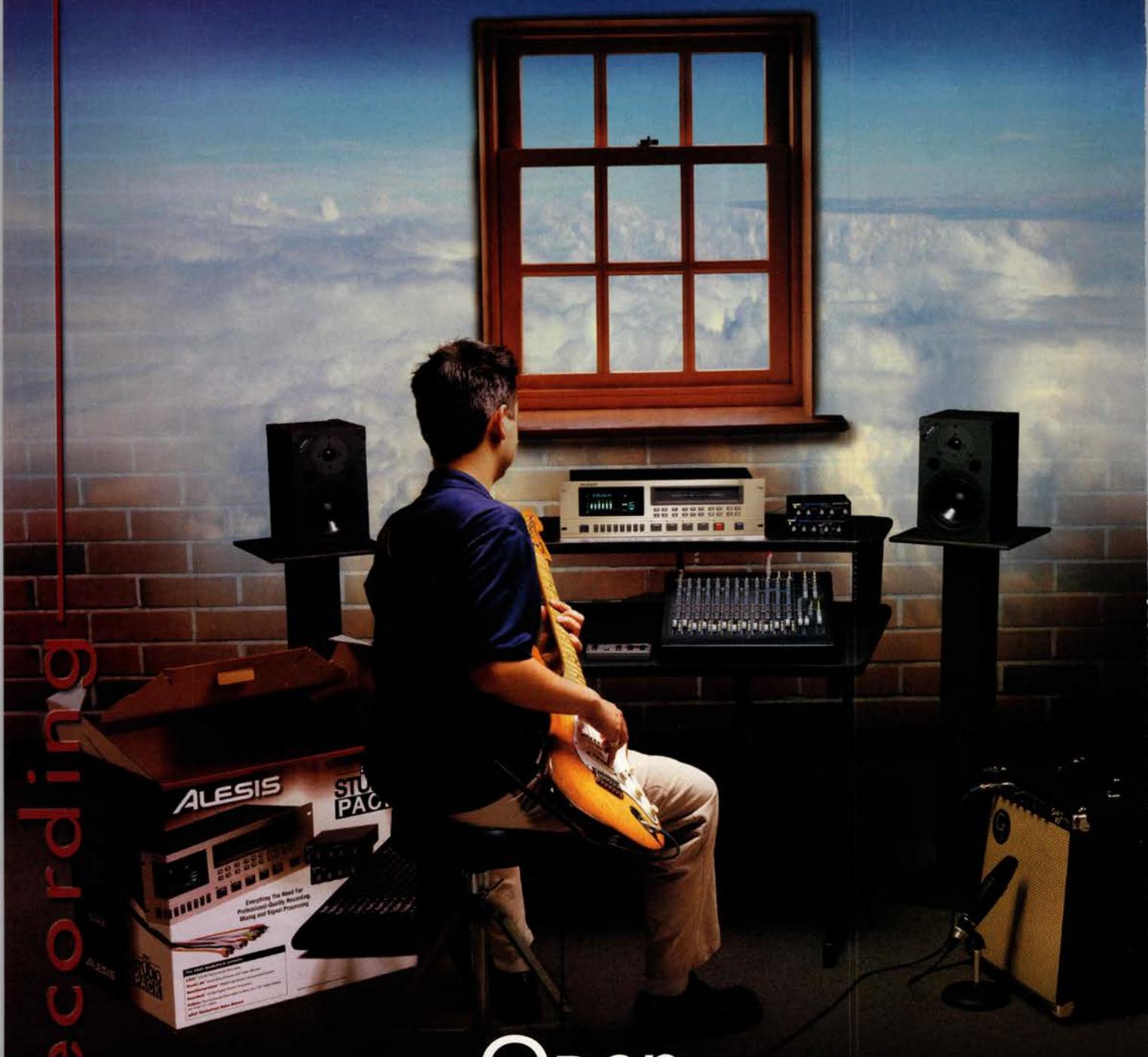
Effects. Chorus, compression, delay, echo, flange, reverb, rotating

THE RATE-O-METER



	Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
Crate DX-212	█████	█████	█████	█████	█████
Johnson JT50	█████	█████	██████	██████	██████
Line 6 Spider 112	█████	█████	█████	██████	██████
Rocktron RepliTone	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
Yamaha DG80-112	███████	███████	███████	███████	███████

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ALESIS

Bench Tests

Line 6 Spider 112

PRICE: \$599
POWER: 50 watts
SPEAKERS: one 12"
Line 6 Custom
FACTORY PRESETS:
4 (12 with optional
Floor Board)
USER PRESETS:
4 (12 with optional
Floor Board)
EFFECTS LOOP: no
MIDI CAPABILITY: none
HEADPHONE OUT: yes
DIRECT OUT: 1/4" (with
speaker simulation)
EXTENSION SPEAKER
JACK: no
WEIGHT: 29 lbs
OPTIONS: FB-4 footswitch
(\$100) Floor Board
footcontroller (\$330)



DIGITAL DYNASTY

speaker, tremolo, vibrato, chorus/echo, flange/echo, compressor/vibrato/echo, compressor/chorus/echo, compressor/flange/echo, compressor/chorus, compressor/echo.

Interface. Crate made the DX-

212 as easy to use as possible. Amp models and effects are selected using two 16-position rotary switches, and you can make quick tone tweaks with the gain, bass, mid, treble, and channel level knobs. Effects are tailored in a similar manner using the effects adjust control, which can alter one or more parameters. For example, on the chorus/echo

212 as easy to use as possible. Amp models and effects are selected using two 16-position rotary switches, and you can make quick tone tweaks with the gain, bass, mid, treble, and channel level knobs. Effects are tailored in a similar manner using the effects adjust control, which can alter one or more parameters. For example, on the chorus/echo

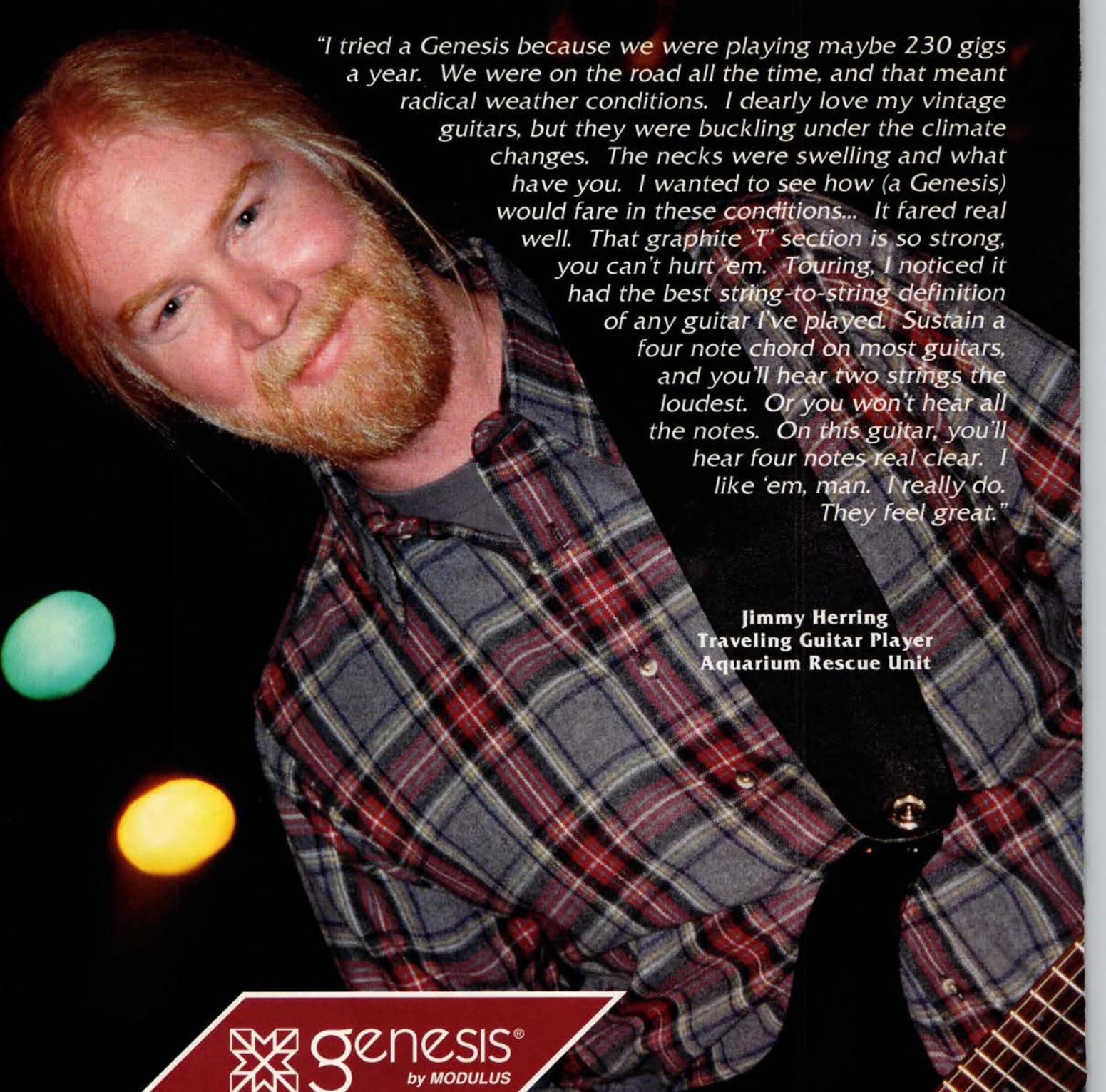
Like most digital amps (except

for Yamaha's DG series, which has motorized knobs), the DX-212's controls don't necessarily represent the selected sound. You could, for example, turn down all the tone knobs, hit a preset, and hear *searing* treble. Whatever timbre has been programmed into the preset is what you hear—regardless of the control-knob positions. To tweak



Rocktron RepliTone

PRICE: \$899
POWER: 60 watts x 2
SPEAKERS: two 12"
Eminence
FACTORY PRESETS:
30 (16 to 30 are
available via MIDI only)
USER PRESETS:
30 (16 to 30 are
available via MIDI only)
EFFECTS LOOP: yes
MIDI CAPABILITY: preset
select, preset update
(via PC and Web)
HEADPHONE OUT: yes
DIRECT OUT: 1/4" (with
speaker simulation)
EXTENSION SPEAKER
JACK: yes
WEIGHT: 51 lbs
OPTIONS: Rocktron MIDI
Mate (\$419)



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Bench Tests

DIGITAL DYNASTY

tones, you first have to turn the knob *past* the programmed setting—only then are you free to dial in the sound to taste. Thankfully, the DX-212 includes a manual mode that lets you bypass the presets entirely, allowing the amp to respond to knob changes just like an analog amp. It's a handy option—especially when sculpting sounds at rehearsal or in the studio. Afterwards, you can store your edits with a single button push.

The DX-212's factory presets are recalled by pressing one of the five bank buttons. Pressing the A/B switch accesses a second set of five presets. You can overwrite a factory preset by holding down the desired bank button for about three seconds. (User presets 11-100 can only be recalled by using the optional DXFC Foot Controller, which was not available at press time.)

Sounds. The DX-212 favors the clean and high-gain realms, and its dynamic structure allows it to respond in a tube-like way to guitar-volume adjustments. Sweeping through the 16 amp choices reveals plenty of worthy clean and distortion colors, but having four Crate

models seems excessive. Why not provide a classic Ampeg model or a high-gain exotic from Bogner or VHT? (In fairness, the Johnson and Rocktron amps also include models of their own wares.)

The factory presets offer a variety of amp and effects combinations. With names such as Jazzy Chorus, Voodoo Child, and Full Metal Jacket, it's clear where these sounds are coming from. The DX-212 excels at Hendrix-on-11 tones and the scooped-mid chunk of modern metal, and its snappy transient response helps preserve the attack and definition of heavier sounds. In addition, the Acoustic preset does a credible job of making solidbodies sound like acoustic-electrics, Black Face has a lively sparkle, and Large Tweed evokes the airy, phase-canceled sound of a 4x10 tweed Bassman.

The DX-212's effects sound pleasing despite their limited adjustment range. The digital reverb is capable of *extremely* wet textures,

Speaker Design for Modeling Amps

How do you develop a speaker for an amplifier that can emulate everything from a raging Marshall to a jangling Vox? According to Eminence product design manager Tom James, it's all about staying in the middle of the road.

"Modeling-amp manufacturers don't need a speaker with a distinctive personality," he says. "They don't want a speaker to be overly warm or bright—although some amp makers ask for more zip than others."

Tuning a speaker for a specific application is a matter of adjusting variables. "The cone is the heart of the speaker," explains James, "and you can modify its response by using different paper stock and varying the ratio of the lacquer and solvent used to treat the paper. More lacquer produces a harder cone and a brighter tone, while more solvent creates a softer cone and a warmer sound. In addition, shorter voice coils make for a more efficient speaker with extended frequency range, and longer coils produce a less efficient speaker with more chunk and bottom end. Even the cone's dust cap can be used to tune the speaker's response. As all high-frequency energy comes from the apex of the cone at the voice coil, using a less acoustically transparent dust cap rolls off brightness. And, as there can be peaks that are four times louder than the mid-band response—typically between 2kHz and 4kHz for a 12" guitar speaker—the current trend is to diminish the bite. I guess guitarists are tired of getting their ears blown out!"

—MICHAEL MOLENDA

Yamaha DG80-112

PRICE: \$999
POWER: 80 watts
SPEAKERS: one 12" Celestion Vintage 30
FACTORY PRESETS: 90
USER PRESETS: 128
EFFECTS LOOP: yes (with blend control)
MIDI CAPABILITY: program select, effects on/off, volume level
HEADPHONE OUT: no
DIRECT OUT: XLR (with level control and speaker simulation)
EXTENSION SPEAKER JACK: yes
WEIGHT: 57 lbs
OPTIONS: MFC10 Footcontroller (\$349)



DIGITAL DYNASTY

though none of the settings sound like a spring 'verb. The chorusing and rotary speaker are bold stereo effects, and the analog-style flanging is juicy. The tremolo is vibey, but none of the multi-effects programs include it.

Pros. Reasonable price, abundant power, and ease of use.

Cons. Minimal control of effects parameters. Front panel knobs are difficult to read when amp is on the floor. Notes are shadowed by hiss, and ghost notes are audible behind your attack.

Johnson JT50

Amp models. Blues Combo, Black Face ('65

Fender Twin Reverb), Tweed ('57 tweed Deluxe), Boutique (Matchless DC30), Hot Rod Combo (Mesa/Boogie MK IIC), Johnson Clean, Johnson Dirty, Johnson Gain, Rectified (Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier), Brit Modern (Marshall JCM 900), Brit Master (Marshall master volume), Brit Class A (Vox AC30).

Effects. Chorus, delay, flange, noise gate (with variable threshold), phaser, pitch shift, reverb (hall, spring), tremolo, vibrato, wah (available only when used with the J8 Foot Controller).

Interface. The JT50 scores points with its easy-to-read, top-mounted controls. Amp models are selected with a 12-position rotary switch, and tone tweaks are made with the gain, bass, mid, treble, and master volume knobs. Effects are also

selected via rotary switch, and a bypass setting lets you nuke the effects group entirely. Cool. Things get a bit more complicated upon encountering the speed/level, depth/gate, level/time, and level/type controls. For example, speed/level lets you alter the modulation rate, tweak the interval of shifted pitches when in detune mode, and adjust the modulation volume (by turning the knob while holding down the tap/shift button). Other functions—such as varying the intensity of modulation effects, selecting between hall and spring reverbs, and changing delay times—are performed in a similar manner. The JT50 offers more effects editing power than some of its competitors, but multifunction knobs can be confusing—especially after a few beers.

Presets are selected by turning the rotary bank-select switch to any one of its seven positions, and then using the preset buttons to call up the three programs in each bank. A level control adjusts the volume of each preset. Customized sounds can be saved by first pressing the store button, then using the bank select knob and preset buttons to locate a suitable user-memory slot. Hitting the store button a second time loads the new preset.

Sounds. The JT50 delivers a good range of clean and heavy tones. The True Blackface preset provides excellent chime and tons of bottom, while Johnson Gain Solo is big and thick in a Smashing Pumpkins way. You could cover a *lot* of bases with just these two. Many of the other high-gain presets are so gained out, however, that it's difficult to control the sustain and feedback at higher volumes. Also, while amp models such as Brit Modern and Rectified deliver the requisite rage for hard rock and modern metal, they also exude a processed aura and don't clean up like their tube-powered counterparts when you lower the gain. The JT50 is fairly hissy, and its noise gate tends to chatter on distortion programs. You can't bypass the gate, but you can adjust the threshold until the gating is less intrusive.

The JT50's flanging and phase-shifting effects sound thick and juicy, and the tremolo and pitch-shifting vibrato offer two vibey ways to put some pulse in your tone. The variable speed, depth, and level parameters for the modulation effects are extremely handy for dialing in sounds. The JT50's digital delay provides up to 2.5 seconds of sparkling echo, but you can't roll off the highs for a warmer, tape-echo response. The spring reverb simulation sounds reasonably authentic, and there's even some surf-style dripiness at higher settings.

Pros. Low price. Above average control of effects parameters. Good clean-to-medium-grind tones. Sufficient volume for gigs.

Cons. Less-than-intuitive effects interface. High-gain tones are processed sounding. Noisy.

Line 6 Spider 112

Amp models. Clean (blackface Fender and

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DIGITAL DYNASTY

Dumble), Twang (blackface Fender Deluxe and late-'50s Fender Bassman), Blues ('65 Marshall JTM 45), Crunch ('68 Marshall 50-watt), Recto (Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier), Insane (Dual Rectifier with distortion pedal).

Effects. Chorus, delay, flange, ping pong, tremolo, tape echo, reverb, wah (available only with optional Floor Board).

Interface. The Spider's sleek front panel sports a simple control arrangement that yields a considerable range of sounds with minimum fuss. Amp models are selected using the 6-position rotary knob, and tone adjustments are made with the drive, bass, mid, and treble knobs. The

Smart Control effects system puts the modulation effects (flange, chorus, and tremolo) on one knob and the delays (delay, tape echo, and ping pong) on another. Delay times are entered using the tap-tempo button, and the presets are selected via the channel buttons located above the tone controls. Edits are stored by holding down one of the four channel buttons for about three seconds. Presets can also be copied from one channel to another.

The Spider has a few "hidden" features. For example, you can add a clean boost to any amp model or preset by holding down the tap-tempo button while turning the channel volume knob past its halfway point. Adding an extra distortion stage, activating a presence boost, or turning

on a noise gate is accomplished in a similar manner by holding down the tap button while turning either the drive, treble, or reverb knobs, respectively. (Boost, distortion, and presence functions can also be activated via the optional Floor Board, which also includes volume and wah pedals and a tuner.)

Sounds. The first Spider we auditioned produced piercing treble frequencies—especially when we plugged in a guitar with single-coil pickups or played the amp aggressively. Line 6 informed us that a software revision had addressed this problem, so we gave their updated amp a listen. Spider #2 sounded appreciably warmer and grittier, though it still favored humbuckers over single-coils.

Sampling the Spider's presets is a quick way to hear what this amp can do. Channel A mates a twang amp model with slapback delay for a rockabilly sound that has the airy ring of a tweed Bassman, channel B delivers Marshall-like grind, channel C pairs a recto model with a short delay for a scooped-mid death tone, and channel D ups the gain considerably—shred tone spoken here.

Despite its 50-watt power rating, the Spider barely produces enough volume to hang with bass and drums—even with its volume controls completely dimmed. You can punch up the sounds a bit with the built-in boost and distortion functions, but running this amp flat out is *not* the key to eliciting its most natural sounds. Wish list? Greater headroom and less upper-midrange intensity.

The Spider's Smart Control effects system provides a nice array of smooth-sounding modulation and delay textures, but aside from being able to tap in different delay times, you can only toggle between several preset versions of each effect. For example, turning the modulation control clockwise yields progressively more intense versions of the flange and chorus effects. (The tremolo setting is different in that the *speed* increases incrementally as you rotate the knob.) The delay control works in precisely the same way, except that the *volume* of each effect increases as you rotate the knob.

Pros. Lowest cost digital amp. User-friendly interface is great for players who want digital advantages without complexity. Extremely lightweight and portable.

Cons. Insufficient volume for gigs. Favors humbuckers over single-coils.

Rocktron RepliTone

Amp models. Brit Class A (Vox AC30), Brit Blues (Marshall Bluesbreaker), Brit Classic (Marshall plexi 100-watt), Brit Hi Gain (Marshall JCM 800), Hi Gain (Rocktron Prophesy), Mega Gain (Rocktron/Egnater IE4), Thrash (Rocktron Voodoo Valve), Grunge (Rocktron/Egnater IE4 with low-frequency boost), Fuzz (Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face), '70s (Mesa/Boogie MK IIB), Texas (Egnater TOL 50 Combo), Blues ('65 Fender Deluxe Reverb),

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DIGITAL DYNASTY

Tweed ('59 Fender Bassman), Poly Jazz (Poly-tone), Clean (Fender Twin Reverb), Clean 2 (Fender Twin Reverb with bright switch on).

Effects. Chorus, compression, delay, detune, flange, HUSH noise-reduction, phaser, reverb, rotary speaker, speaker simulation, tremolo, wah (requires an expression pedal and a MIDI controller).

Interface. Operating the RepliTone is delightfully straightforward. The 16 amp models are selected via a rotary switch, and each model can be tweaked to taste using the gain, level, bass, mid, treble, reverb, and master volume controls. The adjacent preset knob accesses 15 programs,

while a handy manual mode allows the amp to respond to actual knob positions instead of stored settings.

Unique to the RepliTone is an effects select knob which not only activates the effect you want, but toggles between two variable parameters. For example, selecting Chorus Depth lets you vary the intensity of the effect by turning the adjacent effects adjust knob, while selecting Chorus Level lets you change the *amount* of chorusing in the same manner. Delay times and modulation rates are entered by tapping the delay time or rate buttons. (An LED by each button pulses in time with your tempo settings.) Another cool feature is the delay level control, which allows you to make instant tweaks to the

delay mix. The RepliTone's HUSH noise reduction can't be bypassed, but you can vary the threshold with the effects adjust knob.

Along with program selection, the RepliTone's MIDI capabilities allow you to download presets off the Internet. This requires installing the RepliTone Preset Manager on your PC, which interfaces with the amp via MIDI connections.

Sounds. The RepliTone is probably the loudest solid-state combo around. It produces savage lead tones, has excellent dynamic response, and actually sounds and *feels* a lot like a tube amp. You can even turn down the drive on a super distortion program and, yep, the sound cleans right up. Not that you *have* to do that, of course, as the amp packs a bevy of clean and medium-grind textures.

The 16 front-panel presets provide a superb range of sounds. The Tweed setting delivers a full, crisp tone at lower volumes and becomes bigger and ballsier as you turn up. Brit Class A offers excellent shimmer and presence with just a hint of grit, while Brit Blues mimics the dynamic lead/rhythm textures of a Marshall JTM 45. Tweed conjures the airy punch of an old Bassman—with tremolo—while Brit High Gain delivers a respectable Marshall JCM 800 crunch. Mega Gain is an over-the-top, high-gain flange program, and Brit Classic mates a

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DIGITAL DYNASTY

Marshall 100-watt plexi model with a stereo rotary-speaker program. The RepliTone's effects textures are rich and satisfying, and the lush sounding reverb even does the drippy surf thing when cranked. Up to five effects (including Hush and speaker simulation) are simultaneously available.

Pros. Excellent clean and distortion sounds. More than enough volume for gigs. Intuitive interface. Lightweight for its power. Editors' Pick Award winner.

Cons. Knobs are difficult to read when amp is on the floor. Amp models vary radically in volume.

Yamaha DG80-112

Amp models. Clean 1 and 2, Crunch 1 and 2, Drive 1 and 2, Lead 1 and 2.

Effects. Reverb (hall, plate, spring), digital tape echo.

Interface. The two big differences between the DG80-112 and its competitors are its motorized knobs, and the absence of specifically identified amp models. The DG80's amplifier types are selected by pressing one of the eight buttons at the center of the angled front panel, and you can shape these sounds using the gain, master, treble, high mid, low mid, bass, and

CONTACT INFO

Crate, dist. by St. Louis Music, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133; (800) 727-4512; www.crateamps.com

Johnson Amplification, 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070; (801) 566-8800; www.johnson-amp.com

Line 6, 555 St. Charles Dr., Ste. 100, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360; (805) 379-8900; www.line6.com

Rocktron, 2870 Technology Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48309; (248) 853-3055; www.rocktron.com

Yamaha, 6600 Orangethorpe Ave., Buena Park, CA 90620; (714) 522-9011; www.yamaha.com

presence controls. A reverb button lets you toggle between three different reverb types, while a tape-echo simulation is accessed by pressing the mode switch. Doing so temporarily converts the bass, presence, and reverb knobs into time, feedback, and level controls for the echo.

Continued on page 134

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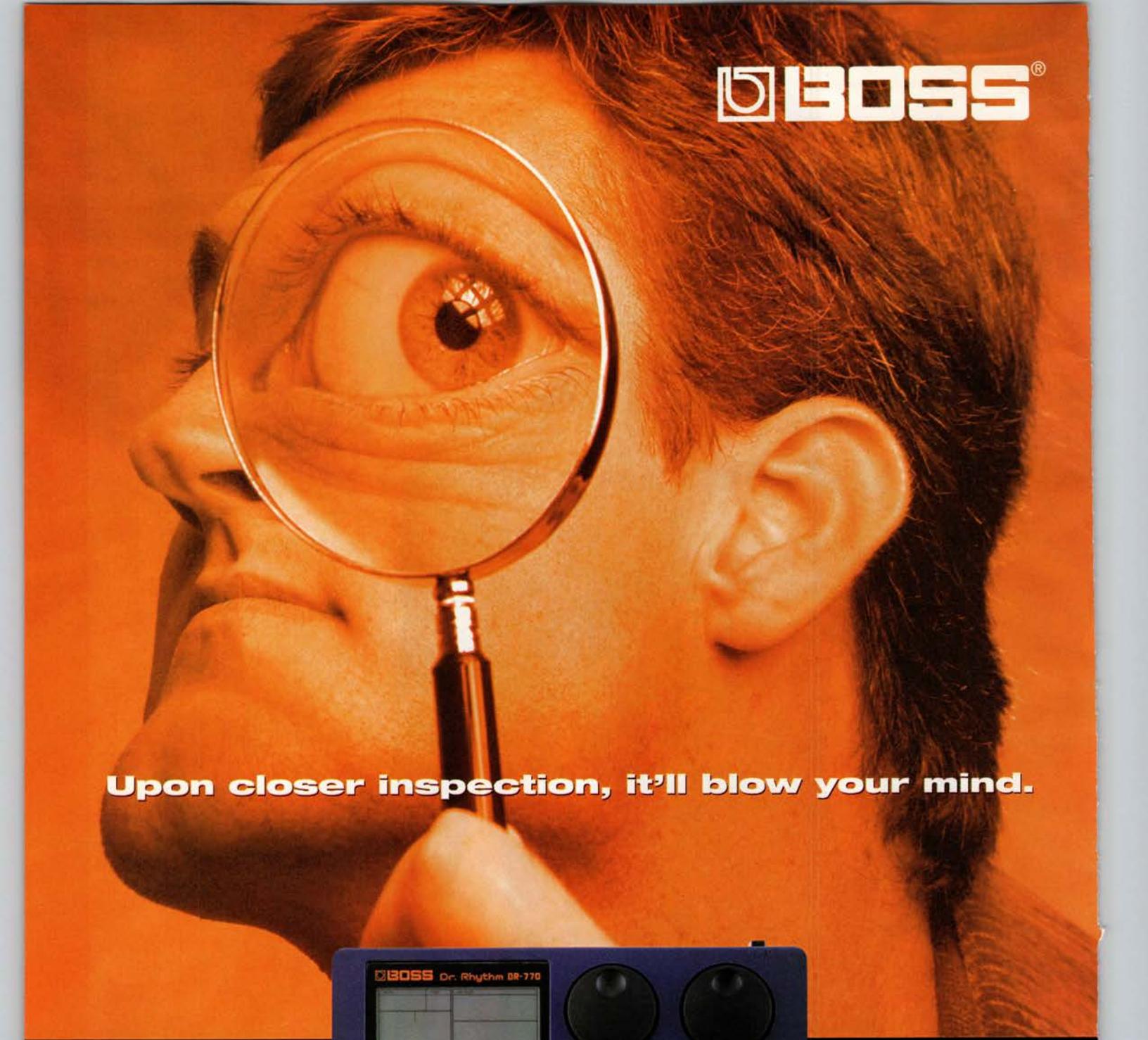
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Bench Tests

12 for 4

Danelectro 12-String

By Michael Molenda

As the gossamer sparkle of an electric 12-string can lay the goosebump factor on everything from retro psychedelia to folk rock to ambient trance music, a 12-string should be a part of each guitarist's arsenal. It's usually a struggle justifying the purchase of ancillary guitars, but acquiring a 12-string these days is a cinch—thanks to manufacturers such as Musicvox and Danelectro. In Danelectro's case, you can *steal* the company's well-made, fab-sounding 12-string for \$399. So if you're in a hurry, I'll sum up this Bench Test as follows: The guitar is brilliant—buy it! (Those who demand corroboration are invited to read on.)

Body Parts

The 12-String is very well constructed for a budget guitar. The factory setup felt great right out of the box—the action was comfy and there were no string buzzes or hardware rattles. In fact, there were noticeable improvements in hardware quality—on the earlier "new" Danos, the pickup-selector switch and the concentric volume and tone knobs were often precariously flimsy. However, the selector switch on the 12-String snaps into position with a tight, reassuring click, and the concentric knobs

(while still molded in cheap plastic) seem to turn almost as precisely as the Dano's Gotoh tuners.

Such quality control is maintained throughout the guitar: The neck joint is as tight as the gasket on a submarine porthole, the satin-finished neck is smooth and dimple free, and the small, vintage-style frets are nicely polished. I'm not a fan of the "historically accurate" binding tape—the workmanship tends to be inconsistent—but the review model's tape was glued down flat, tight, and solid. In addition to the head-turning purple-metalflake finish, the 12-String is also available in dark blue metalflake, red pearl, white pearl, and limo black.

Ergonomics

Danelectro's double-cutaway, DC body style is a good match for the 12-String. The guitar is light, well-balanced, and plays comfortably whether you're standing or sitting. The relatively wide neck is a dream. Generous spacing between string pairs promotes almost effortless bass-string runs, single-note lines, and fingerpicked melodies. The 12-String is simply a joy to play.

Twelve Tones

Unplugged, the Dano is almost

Snapshot

The Danelectro 12-String (\$399) is an *insane* value—a well-built,

good-sounding jangle factory with the kind of cozy playability that invites constant noodling. This inexpensive, vibey guitar gets an Editors' Pick Award.



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THE RATINGS GAME

	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
Danelectro 12-String	4	4	4	4	5	5

12 FOR 4

loud enough to fill in for an *acoustic* 12-string. For some quick song demos, I positioned a Royer ribbon mic ten inches away from the neck pickup and tracked some very convincing "acoustic" jangle. Bass-string runs and folk strums sounded articulate, yet expansive, and when parts were doubled, the tone was absolutely delicious.

Played through a Gibson GA-15,

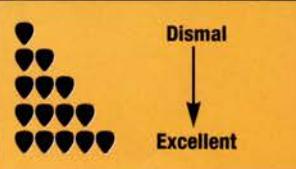
a Vox AC30, and a Rocktron Repli-Tone, the 12-String's dual lipstick pickups exhibited sparkling clarity on arpeggios, bass riffs, and melodic lines, but tended to blur notes on folk-style strums. However, the pickups are cunningly voiced to offer no-fuss tonal variations.

For example, the bridge pickup produces a thin, almost weightless timbre with a slight midrange honk and minimal bass content—not a

particularly elegant tone by itself, but brilliant for layering guitar parts. The incisive tone easily cuts through a chunky mix of overdriven mammoths, and produces a driving chime when doubled or tripled.

The dual-pickup position serves up the Dano's most beatific tone—a warm, sweeping sound with a thick, almost boomy low end and a nice snap to the mids. Single-note melodies loom so large that they seem to explode from the guitar, but the tone is a little *too* bass heavy to deliver balanced timbres for strummed passages. Also—as the two pickups are wired in series—switching to the middle position from the neck or bridge position produces a substantial volume

THE RATE-O-METER



boost. You can select the neck pickup for some dreamy chord work, then snap to the middle position for some boosted signature riffs that jump out of the mix.

The neck pickup yields a creamy glimmer—an excellent foundational tone if the 12-String is to be a track's sole guitar. The overall sound is less aggressive and

Continued on page 130

CONTACT INFO

Danelectro, dist. by Evets, Box 2769, Laguna Hills, CA 92654;
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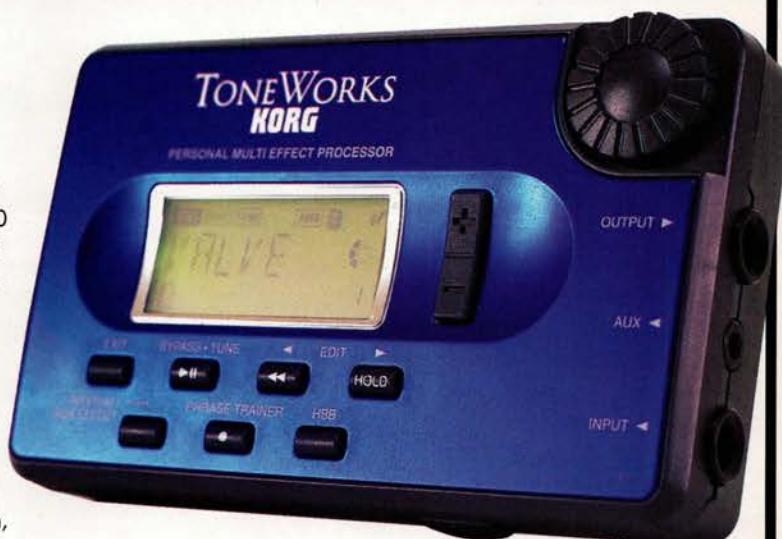
Gizmo Alert

The Pandora PX3

The diminutive Pandora PX3 proves that bigger isn't necessarily better. Packing 56 types of multi-effects (with 50 factory and 50 user programs), a phrase trainer, an auto chromatic tuner, and 40 onboard drum and bass patterns into a 4.7" x 3" x 1" casing, the PX3 boasts extreme firepower. The \$250 marvel is powered by four AAA batteries (or an optional 9-volt DC adapter), and features 1/4" inputs and outputs—as well as a mini-jack input that lets you plug in a CD player or cassette deck and practice to your favorite tunes, or work out parts to a rough mix.

Six processing modes are offered: drive (10 gain types), tone (high and low EQ), modulation (chorus, flange, phase, tremolo, vibrato, pitch, and wah), ambience (reverb and delay), intelligent pitch shift, and cabinet simulation (six speaker configurations). There is only one editable parameter per effect, but the effects are so well-voiced that the meager control isn't a bummer.

The PX3's sounds run the gamut from gaudy to exceptionally musical. Two of my favorites are Angus (it almost nails "Highway to Hell") and Arena (a very ambient, shimmering clean tone). The cabinet simulations increase sonic realism, but don't expect the air-pushing sensation of a Marshall cab. The onboard drum patterns sound very Casio-like, but they're adequate for practice. You can also select from 11 preset bass lines (in any key). The phrase trainer offers 8- and 16-second recording



modes, and allows you to slow down a part to 25% of normal speed without changing pitch. (As with most other phrase samplers, the audio becomes grainy at slower speeds.)

The Pandora PX3 is an awesome practice unit, and the unit's guitar tones, effects, and speaker simulation also make it an invaluable home-recording tool. You can even keep one in your gig bag, where it's ready to save the day if your stage amp buys the farm.

—DARRIN FOX

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Sting Quartet

Akai Headrush, Intelliphase, Shred-O-Matic, and Variwah

By Joe Gore

Electronic musicians know Akai for its samplers, but the company has tended to steer clear of the guitar-gear jungle. But with the introduction of four ferocious new pedals, Akai goes straight to the top of the stompbox food chain. Their new delay, phasing, distortion, and wah pedals are impressive units. They boast rugged metal housings, true-bypass switching, excellent sound quality, ingeniously simple interfaces, and some sounds you *won't* hear from rival pedals.

Headrush E1

The Headrush (\$279) is easily one of the best-sounding and most flexible digital-delay pedals ever made. Let's start with the conventional delay effects: The unit's 16-bit, 44.1kHz audio quality dials most of the competition, yet a high-frequency roll-off knob lets you soften the edges of the echoes for a less hi-fi effect. Still not analog enough? Switch to tape-echo mode and thrill to the best *faux*-Echoplex sound anywhere near this price range.

Though most guitarists will probably just use the unit's mix output when operating in tape-

echo mode, the Headrush can also deliver cascading echoes from its *four* separate 1/4" outputs. The ratio and head-gap knobs allow you to control these signals in very tape-like ways. The former varies the output ratio, or the amount that the output sig-

nals from "heads" 2-4 diminish in volume after the first repeat. The head-gap knob lets you alter the virtual head *spacing*. At one end of its rotation, the heads are evenly spaced and the delays occur in sequential order—at the other, the heads are split into two pairs for

staggered echo effects. (This latter setting simulates the classic, dual-tape-deck arrangement originally used to create slapback echo.)

With the outputs plugged into five amps (the mix out provides the dry signal in this configuration), the quadraphonic effects



Snapshot

Akai enters the pedal market with four exciting stompboxes: the Headrush (\$279), Intelliphase (\$149), Shred-O-Matic (\$229), and Variwah (\$199). Each boasts awesome sounds; innovative, yet easy-to-use features; solid construction; and a fair price. Editors' Pick Awards go to the Headrush and the Variwah.

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Bench Tests

STING QUARTET

are as impressive as they are impractical. The Headrush's real utility here lies in the studio, where it can easily be plugged into five available input channels to create everything from rockabilly rave-ups to cavernous, Pink Floyd-style soundscapes. With its multi-tap capabilities and dedicated outputs, the Headrush is like having four Echoplexes in one neat little box.

Other cool Headrush features include a tap-tempo switch with a flashing tempo LED—a rarity

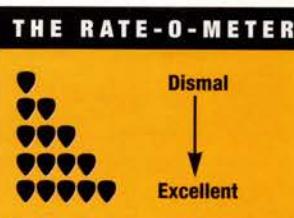
	Tone	Workmanship	Vibe	Value
Headrush E1	████████	██████	██████	████████
Intelliphase P1	██████	██████	██████	████████
Shred-O-Matic D1	███████	██████	██████	████████
Variwah W1	████████	██████	██████	████████

among delay pedals. Maximum delay time is a stellar 23.8 seconds for normal delay and 5.9 seconds in tape-simulation mode. Wow.

CONTACT INFO

Akai, 4710 Mercantile Dr., Ft. Worth, TX 76137; (800) 433-5627; www.akai.com/akaipro

There's more! The Headrush also functions as a looping recorder, providing 23.8 seconds of full-bandwidth looping, or 11.9 seconds in overdub mode. Granted, it's not as full-featured as the \$459 Boomerang Phrase Sampler or the discontinued Lexicon Jam Man and Oberheim Echoplex loopers: The Headrush has no reverse audio capability,



and while you can stack up infinite overdubs, your

Gizmo Alert

Pickboy Picks

As the guitar's sound starts at the strings, what you choose to strike those suckers with is pretty important. To this end, Pickboy manufactures its line of professional picks using materials that produce subtly different timbres right at the point of impact. (The company also markets a design series of picks imprinted with everything from skulls to pinups.) All test picks were 1mm thick, and were auditioned on a Collings acoustic, an unplugged Danelectro 56-U2, and a McInturff Polaris Pro plugged into a Vox AC15. All pro Pickboys retail at \$37.50 for a bag of 50 (or 75¢ per pick), and selected models are also available in 12-pick blister packs for \$8.95.

Carbon Nylon Edge. Slightly larger than a jazz-style pick, this hybrid offers a rigid, yet forgiving surface for excellent control on strums and picked runs—although the grip is a bit slippery. The sound is articulate and twangy, without being brash.

Celltex RF. This extremely stiff pick—which sounds like a poker chip when dropped on a hard surface—delivers good control, a sharp attack, and a sure grip (thanks to its embossed hemp leaf). The water-based material (developed to replace celluloid) feels slightly sandpaper-like against the strings, but the pick's density was made for punching out palm-muted rhythm licks.

Ceramic. While this pick produces a sharp, ringing attack (with just a hint of rasp) and offers good control, its "speed bump" gripping surface feels awkward.

Meta Carbonate. The Meta-Carb is my "pick" of the bunch. The tone it produces is snappy, yet also fat and round—very sexy! Control is exquisite, and the grip is firm and comfortable.



Nylon 66 RF. The Nylon is the warmest-sounding pick of the group. The grip feels very secure—thanks again to an embossed hemp leaf—and the control is precise. Like the Celltex, however, the 66 exhibits a sandy rasp upon impact.

Pos-A-Grip PC. A bright, articulate pick with excellent control. The Pos-A-Grip's girthy profile and grip holes feel very comfy when running warm-up scales, but the "heaviness" is somewhat clunky in gigging situations—the holes are constant reminders that you're grasping a hunk o' plastic.

Rainbow. Although it produces a slightly brighter attack than the Meta Carbonate, the celluloid Rainbow offers a similar feel, grip, and control. The Rainbow's flexibility makes it a brilliant choice for expressive strumming.

—MICHAEL MOLENDA

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only undo options are erase *everything* and erase everything *except* the first layer. Still, the Headrush packs an amazing amount of looping power for any stompbox, let alone one this inexpensive. Particularly ingenious is the way you can control record, playback, overdub, and erase-overdub via two footswitches. What a debut! This pedal wins an Editors' Pick Award.

Power supply: AC wall wart.

Pros: Extraordinarily warm tones. Realistic tape-delay simulation. Pristine audio quality. Generous delay time. Ingenious interface.

Cons: No 9-volt battery option. No reverse delays.

Intelliphase P1

The Intelliphase (\$149) offers both conventional and touch-sensitive phase shifting. The warm, tape-like phasing sounds have lots of alluring depth, though the effect is more cushiony than cutting. The touch-controlled phasing feature is wonderful. You can choose between "soft touch" and "hard touch" modes—that is, you can have the phasing become more or less pronounced as your notes diminish in volume. It's a smooth, organic-sounding effect that can add subtle animation to a passage. While the sound is unique among current stompboxes, I couldn't help but wish Akai had gone a step further and allowed playing dynamics to control the modulation *speed* as well as its depth. Still, the Intelliphase is an uncommonly flexible phaser that provides many cool colors.

Power supply: 9-volt battery or optional wall wart.

Pros: Fat-sounding, tape-like phasing with touch-sensitive effects that are unique among stompboxes.

Cons: No touch-sensitive control of modulation rate. Tones lack "slice."

Shred-O-Matic D1

Few distortion pedals can match the sheer range of the Shred-O-Matic (\$229). With both true tube overdrive and solid-state distortion, the pedal delivers everything from slightly overheated blues tone to a face-slapping crunch. The Shred-O-Matic's rocker pedal regulates the amount of drive, making it easy to visit some interesting nooks and crannies between warm and incinerated. The pedal-assign switch also allows you to use the treadle as a simple volume pedal, or to fade between the solid-state and tube distortion tones. However, I couldn't detect any timbral difference between the pedal-up and pedal-down positions when using the tube/diode mix mode.

Setting the drive switch to the diode position yields a smooth, girthy distortion tone with a slightly scooped-mid texture and a touch of wah inflection. Big and *bad!* The tube setting offers

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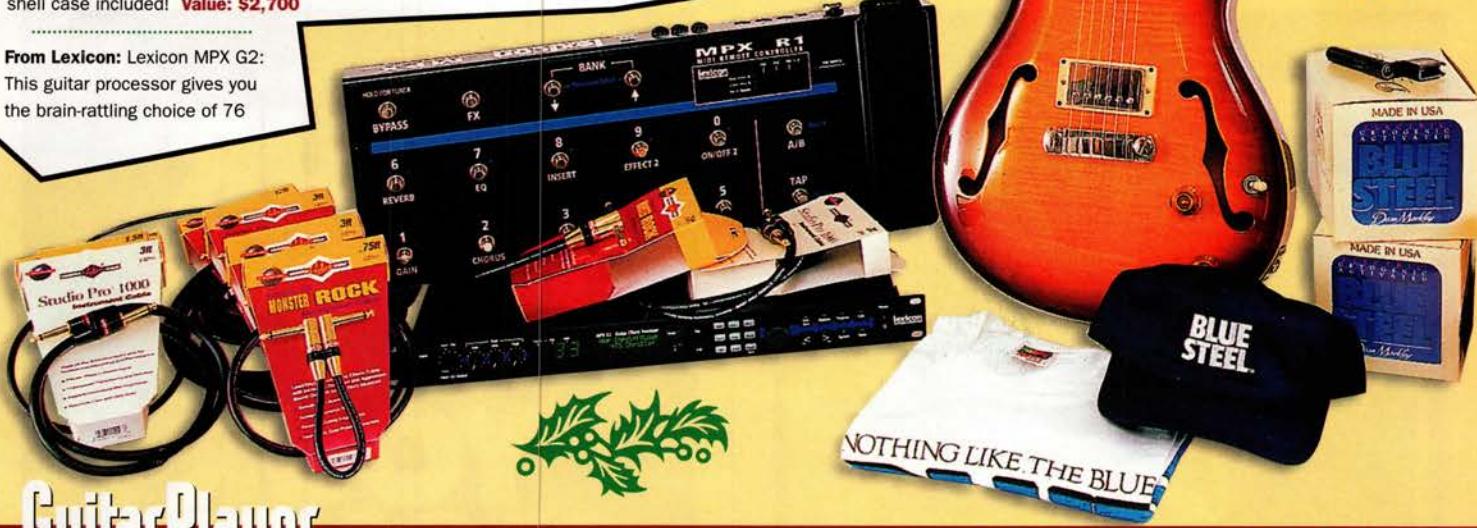
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STING QUARTET

roughly the same amount of gain, but with a more in-your-face midrange presence.

The Shred-O-Matic's lighter overdrive sounds are lovely, but its forte is carnivorous, ultra-modern shred tone with chunky attack and insane amounts of gain. These dynamic lead sounds do not lack presence, but they aren't icepicky either. Even when using a Strat's rear pickup, all it took to get a buttery sound was to put the high tone control on zero and crank the lows. Players seeking a do-it-all overdrive will be hard-pressed to top this remarkable pedal.

Power supply: AC wall wart.

Pros: Incredible range of aggressive distortion tones.

Cons: No 9-volt battery option. Distortion blending function is weak.

Variwah W1

The trend among new wah pedals is to provide greater user control. Like the recently introduced Dunlop CryBaby CB535Q, the Variwah (\$199) lets you adjust its filter frequency (though not the bandwidth). But Akai gives you even more! Along with a handy auto-wah mode, the Variwah offers a unique swell-wah feature—an LFO-driven filter effect with adjustable rate, depth, and pitch. It's a fresh-sounding feature

that provides everything from subtle, tremolo-like throbbing and soft, watery sweeps to seizure-grade pulsations. Furthermore, you can use the pedal to regulate the key parameters (width, speed, offset, and sensitivity).

The Variwah's basic wah sound is reminiscent of a CryBaby, but the *feel* is completely different. The longer pedal throw and separate bypass button make using the Variwah a bit more work. (You can't, for example, wind up a solo with the pedal down and go right into bypass with one push.) The auto-wah mode provides a nice range of funky, farty flavors, and the width, sensitivity, and attack-time controls provide many ways to tailor the filter response to your playing style. Here again, you can opt for pedal control of any one of the parameters.

Even without its groovy swell-wah feature, the Variwah would be one of the best wahs around. Factor in this wicked effect, and you have another Editors' Pick Award winner.

Power supply: 9-volt battery or optional wall wart.

Pros: Great traditional wah sounds. Exciting LFO filter effects. Controllable filter depth and frequency.

Cons: No adjustable wah bandwidth. No high-pass or low-pass options in auto-wah mode.

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Continued from page 123

less bass intensive than the middle position, ensuring that both strummed chords and single-note lines are produced with warmth and clarity. Of course, you can dial in many more sounds by experimenting with the tone controls, but the "three positions/three sounds" nature of the 12-String ensures that a well-voiced timbre is instantly available—that's one heck of an advantage when a song begs for dynamic variation on the fly. The single-coil lipsticks are susceptible to noise, however, and the 12-String exhibited hums and buzzes in all pickup positions when played within eight feet of a computer monitor.

Just Buy It

Along with some other guitar manufacturers, Danelectro has raised the bar on the bang-for-buck meter towards the heavens. Good guitars are becoming so inexpensive that clichés about suffering with the painfully poor action of a first guitar have already been retired. Far from a beginner's jangle machine, however, the 12-String's fast looks, sturdy workmanship, and shimmering tones make it an ideal instrument for working pros and budget-minded players alike. And at a paltry \$399, it would be criminal *not* to fork out the cash for such a fabulous guitar.

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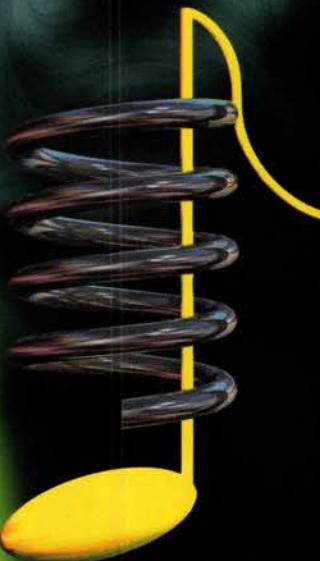
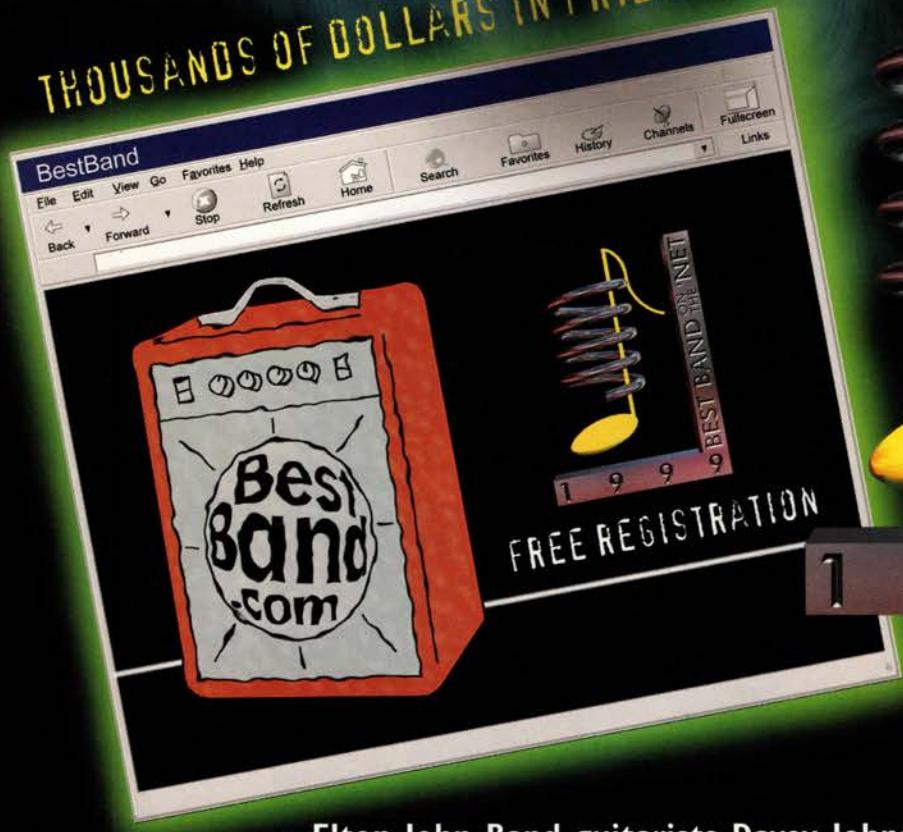
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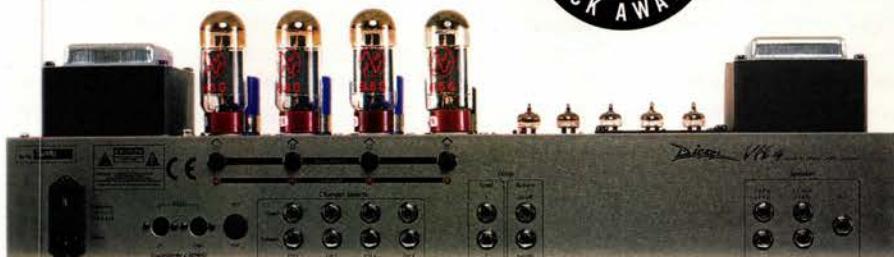
By Darrin Fox

A large number of boutique amp builders go for all things retro, but manufacturers such as Bogner, Soldano, and VHT offer a different breed of boutique beast for players who want face-melting high-gain tones, multiple channels, and effects loops. The Munich-based Diezel company is a relative newcomer to the high-gain, boutique amp arena, but as their VH4 head proves, there's room at the top if you've got what it takes. This marvel wins an Editors' Pick Award.

Diezel Power

The wicked-sounding VH4 (\$4,124; \$4,320 for the stereo VH4S) is a 100-watt tube amp with four independent preamp sections, effects-loop options galore, and, most importantly, a vast array of incredible tones. Channel 1 walks the line between American and British flavors—you get tantalizing Fender sparkle, but the VH4's lunging punch also *screams* Hiwatt. It has one of the loudest, most detailed clean tones I've ever heard. Pumped through a Marshall 4x12, the VH4 produces astonishing thump, yet remains airy and open—quite a feat with a closed-back cab.

Channel 2 delivers punishing low end, hearty midrange chunk, and complex treble frequencies. (Think of it as the AC/DC channel, and you've got the idea.) In fact, the VH4 offers a plethora of tones from channel 2 alone, and the superbly voiced bright switches (on channels

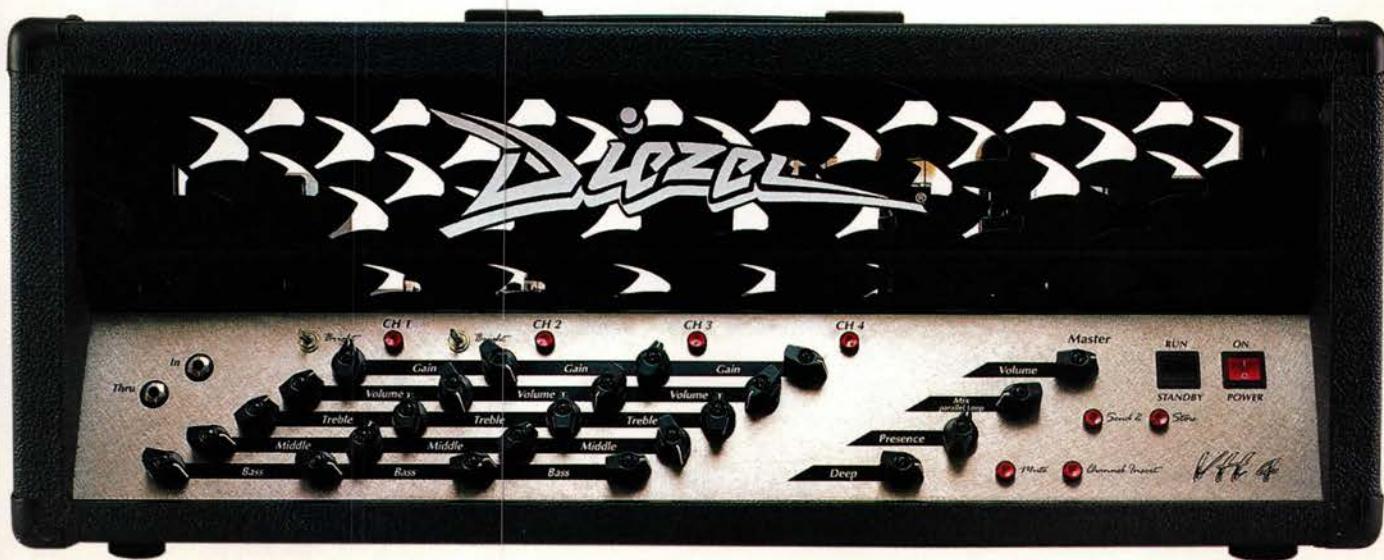


The VH4 sports a multitude of speaker and effects loop jacks, and its interior is clean and rugged. Below: The VH4's slanted controls make it difficult to see which channel's knobs you're actually turning.

1 and 2) can elicit righteous high-end ping even from a Les Paul's neck pickup.

The VH4's third channel provides a *very* close approximation of the early-Van Halen "brown sound"—it's throaty and unbelievably dynamic. The gain is equivalent to the burn mode of most amps, yet, by simply mellowing picking attack, you can achieve a husky, purring clean tone. Nice.

Channel 4 is where the VH4 shifts into high gear, lathering on distortion so thick it's almost laughable. The frothy nature of this channel is sure to send high-gain fans into a frenzy. It puts everything from milkshake creaminess to sucked-mid depravity right at your fingertips. The VH4's global deep control is subtle with a 4x12 cabinet, but it adds noticeable depth



EXOTICA

when using the amp with an open-back 1x12.

Knobs and Knuckles

The Diezel's four channels are laid out in mixer-like vertical strips. Each channel has a lighted selector button; independent treble, mid, bass, gain, and volume controls; and 1/4" channel-insert jacks. The slanted knob layout saves space, but it can be disorienting. (I often found myself turning the wrong knob.)

Global controls include master volume, presence, deep, master mute, MIDI functions, and effects-loop mix. A front-panel jack allows you to link the Diezel to a separate power amp. The VH4 sports two global effects loops (series and parallel), five speaker outputs (2x8Ω/1x4Ω; 2x16Ω/1x8Ω; 1x16Ω), and MIDI In and Thru jacks. MIDI programmable functions include channel switching, activation of the effects loops and channel inserts, and master mute on/off.

Four tube-fault LEDs (one for each output tube) alert you in case of tube failure. Should this occur while you're playing, the corresponding LED will light, and the amp will automatically switch to the healthy pair of tubes. This lowers the power, of course, but at least you can finish the gig. The tubes are also individually fused. We auditioned the VH4 with its supplied quartet of Yugoslavian 6L6s, but a bias switch allows for quick substitution of 5881s, EL34s, or 6550s. The power transformer is also switchable to 115-volt or 230-volt operation.

The Diezel's interior is a masterpiece of rugged design. The pots, jacks, and output-tube sockets are mounted to the heavy, folded-steel chassis. The smaller components (including the nine preamp tubes) reside on an 1/8"-thick, glass/epoxy PC-board. The wiring is beautifully routed, and all switching functions are handled by gold-contact relays. The cabinet construction is clean, and the black Tolex is flawlessly applied. My only complaint is that the VH4's two-piece front grille rattled annoyingly when the amp was played at high volumes.

Maximum Overdrive

The Diezel VH4 is a rare breed. It delivers stellar clean tones, as well as coherent and musical ultra-high-gain sounds. Many amps barely give you one great sound, let alone four. And the VH4 can do it at *skull-crushing* volume—it's as loud as the loudest Marshall I've ever heard! Granted, this amp isn't cheap. But its jaw-dropping tone, exceptional construction, musically voiced EQ, and MIDI capabilities make it a must-have for those lustful after a *truly* state-of-the-art amplifier. **Diezel**, dist. by Salwender International, 1140 N. Lemon St. #M, Orange, CA 92867; (714) 538-1285; www.salwender.com.

DIGITAL DYNASTY

Continued from page 118

Hit the mode switch again and the knobs automatically rotate to their original positions.

Preset selection is accomplished via a set of up/down keys, and stored sounds are activated by pressing the recall button. The motorized knobs require anywhere from one to ten seconds to move into their updated positions when a new preset (or mode) is selected, but there's no *audible* lapse, as the internal settings change instantly. You can also turn a knob and instantly hear the result—no need to "capture" a parameter by first wiggling the knob back and forth. Nice.

Sounds. The DG80 is hands down the most natural-sounding amp of the group. It produces crisp, warm tones, and offers surprising complexity and dimension in both its clean and distorted modes. The DG80 provides amazing tube *feel*, and its super distortion tones clean up well when you lower the gain. This amp is also extremely quiet—all the more astonishing as it doesn't use a noise gate.

The DG80 shined in the studio, producing a convincing tube-like lead grind from its direct out. Volume isn't an issue either, as the amp has more than enough muscle to hang with a full band. Though you can't press a button and instantly hear a blackface Fender or plexi Marshall simulation, the DG80 is better equipped to recreate those sounds than some of its competitors. Many of the presets are real standouts. Number 1 (Clean 1) yields exceptionally crisp and detailed tones with shimmering reverb color. Number 19 (Texas Blues, Slight Overdrive) is an extremely ballsy lower-gain lead sound. Number 22 (60w 1x12 Tube Combo O/D + EQ) packs the old-school-rock vibe of a gained-up Mesa/Boogie MK I. Number 26 (British Stack Clean Sound) is a surprisingly good clean setting that delivers cool, Hiwatt-like grind as you turn up. Many of the high-gain sounds benefit from turning up the bass, and even presets that weren't instantly exciting responded beautifully to EQ tweaks.

Given the DG80's considerable processing power, it's a drag that the amp doesn't sport a few more effects. But considering how good the reverb and delay sound, the absence of chorus and tremolo seems less of an issue. The 3-knob echo is handy for dialing in low-fi rockabilly slapback, and if you want *really* ambient sounds, just crank up the delay time and add some hall reverb—it's not exactly a tube Echoplex washed in Lexicon reverb, but it's not far from it.

Pros. Amazingly natural sounding. Excellent interface. More than enough power for gigs. Editors' Pick Award winner.

Cons. Limited effects. Weighs as much as a tube amp of equal wattage.

Thanks to Joe Gore for his assistance and insights.

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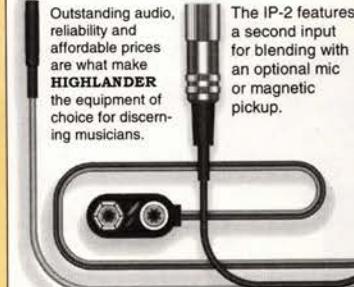
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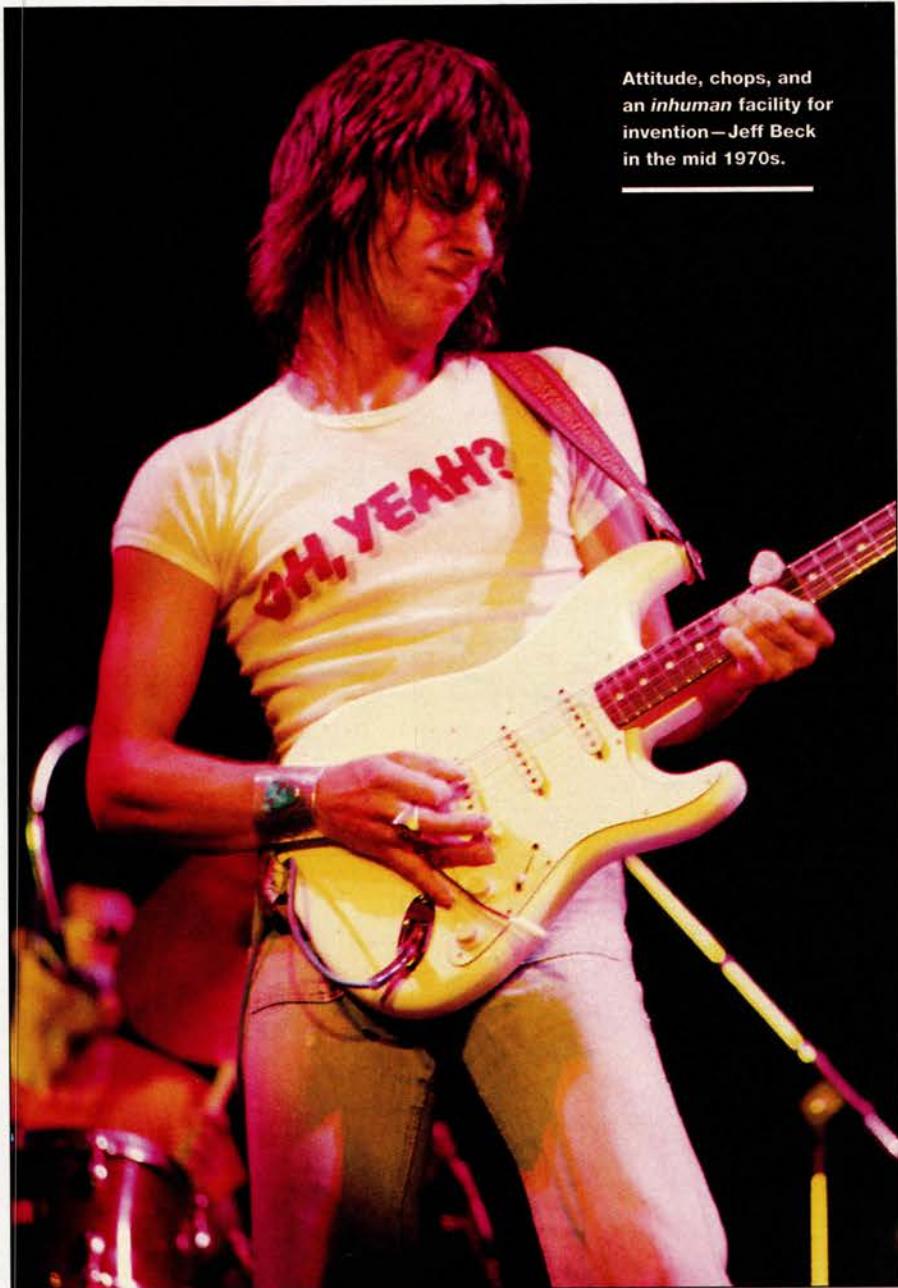
SOLO TRANSCRIPTION

When Jeff Beck entered the mid-'70s fusion arena, he found a strong ally in former Mahavishnu Orchestra keyboardist Jan Hammer. On *Wired*, Beck's '76 follow-up to the groundbreaking *Blow by Blow*, Hammer added his signature synth to four cuts, including his own "Blue Wind." (The song—which Beck still performs live—also appears on 1977's *Jeff Beck with the Jan Hammer Group Live*.) Recorded as a duet with Hammer on drums and keys, this I-IV "country and Eastern" blues in E provides a perfect vehicle for three rounds of ferocious guitar/synth dueling.

Notice how each cycle comprises 18 bars of 4/4 and a bar of 7/4. After repeating the exotic unison melody, the pair trades solo choruses, building tension and momentum with each pass. Pick in hand, Beck is in top form and full of surprises, making these solos a worthy primer for the uninitiated—as well as sweet candy for even the most jaded ears.

Don't be misled by Beck's subdued entrance at 1:20. His off-kilter quote of the song's main riff is part of a strategy that leaves room to build dynamically. The slippery moves in bars 3 and 4 turn up the heat, and set up a nasty 4-to- $\frac{5}{4}$ trill and some open-position gnarliness (bars 5 through 8). In bar 9, Beck obscures the change to the IV chord with deceptive octaves before nailing the A harmonic. His delayed wang-bar vibrato triggers a bit of trem-spring squeak, but he morphs this into a cool, steely texture. In bars 11 and 12, the ascending A/C# idea illustrates Beck's penchant for fretting upper-register licks on the lower and middle strings. This lick would ring more if played on higher strings, but by working in the fourteenth position, he perfectly sets up bars 13 and 14.

Solo 2 (2:12) opens with six bars of tortured, sixth-string harmonics that begin at the 7th fret. The tab locations are approximate,



Attitude, chops, and an *inhuman* facility for invention—Jeff Beck in the mid 1970s.

so you'll have to fish the chimes out by ear. Heading south, you'll find six harmonics—octave, 3, 5, $\frac{7}{4}$, octave, and 9—between the 5th and 3rd frets.

For his last solo (3:04), Beck peels out and never looks back, leaving a cloud of frantic

sixteenth-note diads, wacky descending chromatics, and Mahavishnu-style rapid-fire picking, pull-offs, and pentatonic bends. Beck's final trem-bar bend could be the sickest note he has recorded since the ending of "You Shook Me" on *Truth*.

—JESSE GRESS

TRANSCRIBED BY JESSE GRESS

Blue Wind

Music by Jan Hammer

Guitar solo 1

♩ = ca. 182

1:20

(E5)

N.C.

Guitar solo 2

♩ = ca. 182

2:12

(E5)

N.C.

Sheet music for guitar (A5) with tablature and performance markings. The music is in 6/8 time, key of A major (three sharps). The tablature shows the left hand's position on the guitar neck, with fingers 3, 2, and 1 indicated. The right hand uses a pick. Various performance markings are present, including grace notes, slurs, and a 'hold' instruction. The tablature includes a 'T' (Top), 'A' (A), and 'B' (Bottom) reference line. Fingerings and a strumming pattern (2 0 2 3 2 0 2) are also indicated.

8va- (E5) to Synth solo 2:38

14

pre-B R B R B R lay back B R ~~ 17 17 17 19 19

(22) 19 17 (20) 19 17 19 18(21) 18 17 18(21) 18 (18) 17 17 17 19 19

T
A
B



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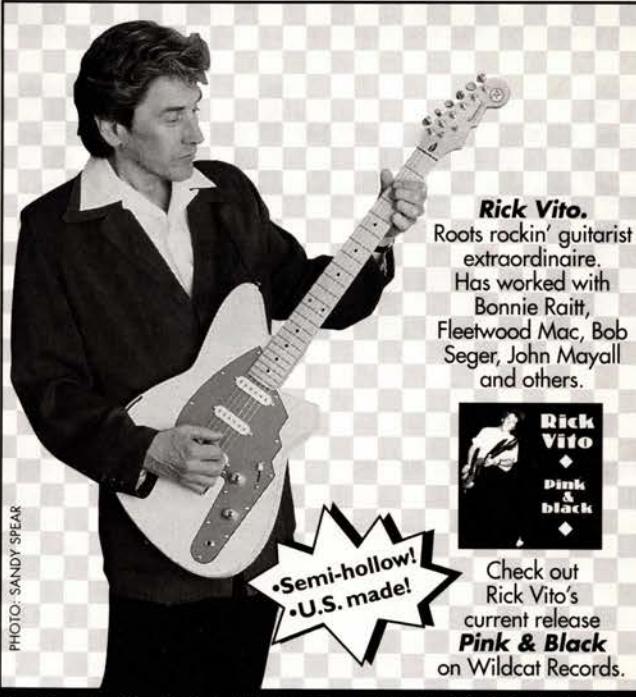
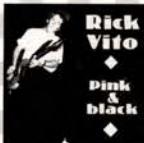


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Sneaky Fingering Secrets

BY DUCK BAKER

HAVING EVOLVED FROM

19th-century parlor music, American fingerstyle guitar has sprouted many stylistic branches, including country blues, old-time country, Hawaiian slack-key, Chet Atkins-style, and ragtime. Despite their differences, these musics share a common root. Players as diverse as Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Blake, Merle Travis, and Cyril Pahinui almost exclusively base their music on steady, alternating bass lines. It's striking that other great fingerstyle traditions—such as classical, flamenco, and bossa nova—make little, if any, use of this technique. Because of its reliance on alternating bass, American fingerstyle guitar demands a unique approach to fretting-hand fingering.

Division of labor. To play alternating bass lines, you need to commit certain fingers to sustaining bass notes, while leaving other fingers free to fret melody notes. This typically involves unorthodox fingerings.

Look at Ex. 1, which features a steady alternating bass and an active melody line within a C chord. In this pattern, your 3rd and 2nd fingers hold down the bass notes. The 2nd finger never moves, while the 3rd shifts between the fifth and sixth strings.

This leaves your 1st and 4th fingers free to fret melody notes. The 4th finger works the 3rd and 4th frets, while the 1st finger handles notes on the 1st and 2nd frets.

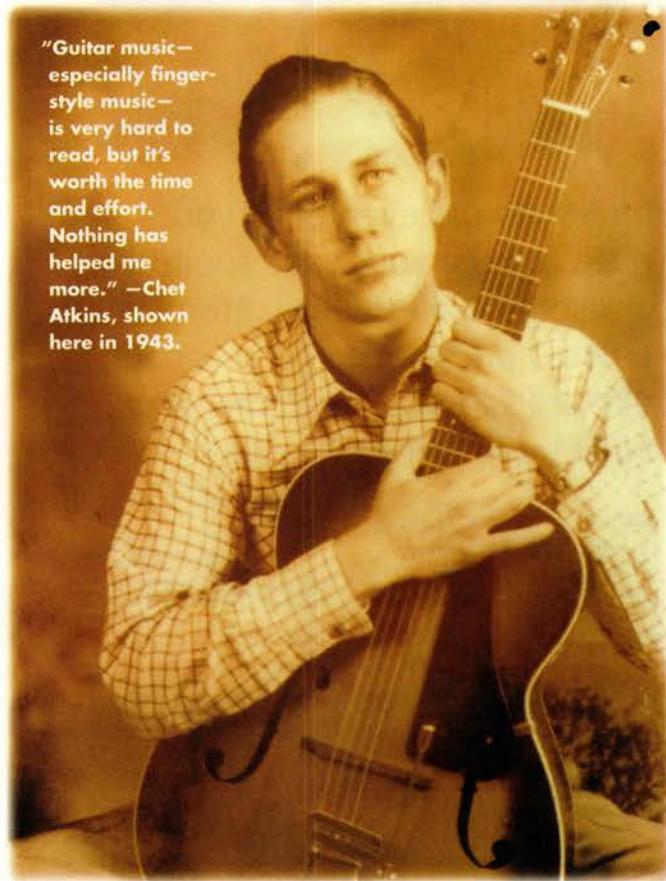
Untying the knot. It's the 2nd fret that's crucial. To play A (on the *and* of beat one, bar 1), the natural tendency is to move your 2nd finger from the fourth to the third string, but you'll save yourself endless headaches if you simply sneak your 1st finger over to A instead. For years, I've watched good guitarists tie their fingers into knots because they move the 2nd finger back and forth. If you do this, the E bass note can't ring for its full quarter-note value.

A similar situation occurs in beat two, bar 2: While sustaining the E bass with your 2nd finger, use your 1st finger to fret both G_b and F on the top string.

Ex. 2 shows how the division of labor is the same in a G chord. Again, your 2nd and 3rd fingers commit to the bass, while your 1st and 4th fingers play the melody. Here, the dance is even trickier, but once you master the moves, you'll be rewarded with ringing, independent bass and melody lines.

Picking tips. To play these examples up to speed, you'll need to pick them with your thumb, index,

"Guitar music—especially finger-style music—is very hard to read, but it's worth the time and effort. Nothing has helped me more." —Chet Atkins, shown here in 1943.



and middle fingers. Use your thumb to hit the bass notes, your middle finger to pluck the down-beat melody notes (these occur simultaneously with the bass notes), and your index finger for the up-beat melody notes.

styles, including swing and free jazz, traditional Irish and Appalachian music, ragtime, blues, and gospel. He has several books and instructional videos on the art of fingerstyle, steel-string guitar.

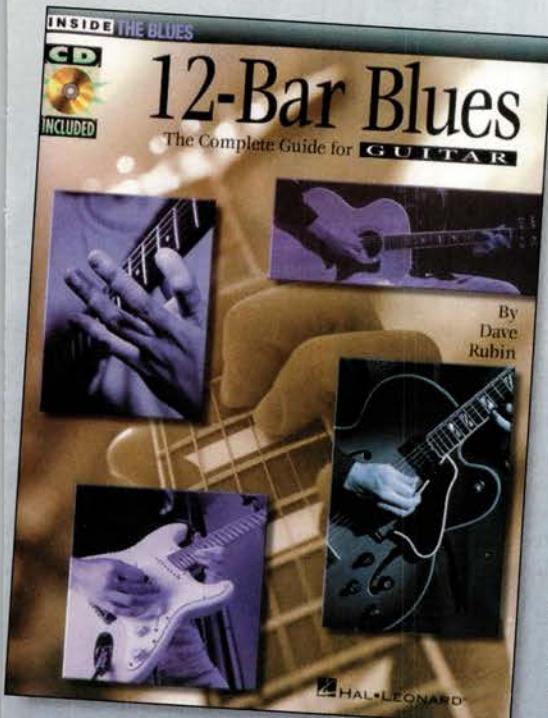
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Ex. 1

C

Ex. 2

G

**IF YOUR BLUES RHYTHM**

chops are lagging, and you need an infusion of cool voicings, grooves, and riffs, you'll dig Dave Rubin's *12-Bar Blues—The Complete Guide for Guitar*. This book-and-CD package [\$14.95 from Hal Leonard] is all about blues accompaniment. Rubin includes the chords and riffs (written in tab and standard notation) for several variations of slow 12/8 blues, swing shuffles, boogie shuffles, Chicago riffs, minor blues, jazz blues, and bebop blues. To round out the package, he explains the secrets of tritone comping and offers a handful of hip intros and turnaround. Backed by drum machine and bass, Rubin demos each example on the companion CD, so even if sight-reading isn't your strongest suit, you'll easily grasp the

grooves by simply spinning the disc.

Excerpted from a section titled "Jazzy Minor Blues," the following example proves that you can work uptown sounds into a 12-bar context. "Soulful jazz," Rubin elaborates, "was popular in the late '60s. Two hits from the era—'Chitlins Con Carne' by Kenny Burrell and 'Coming Home Baby' by Herbie Mann—are based on progressions similar to this one."

Rubin goes on to explain why the $A\flat 13$ (bars 5 and 6) substitutes for $Fm9$ —the IVm —and how Albert King's "As the Years Go Passing By" contains the $A\flat 9-G7\#9$ change (bars 9 and 10). Record several passes through this progression, and then try soloing over it using the C blues scale.

A thorough and fun exploration of blues rhythm guitar, Rubin's *12-Bar Blues* promises hours of playing enjoyment.

—ANDY ELLIS ■

Quickly $\text{♩} = 150$

$Cm7$

$A\flat 13$

$Cm7$

$A\flat 9$

$G7\#9$

$Cm7$

$Gaug$

Spinning Clusters Into Lines

BY ERIK HALBIG

WE ALL HIT MUSICAL SLUMPS. ONE

way to escape the creative doldrums is to look at a familiar subject from a new perspective. Take chord voicings, for instance. You've probably practiced diatonic triads—three-note chords built from major scale tones stacked in thirds. Let's look at another way to generate harmony from a major scale, and then explore licks derived from the resulting chords.

Clusters from intervals. Try Ex. 1—a series

of chordal clusters in the key of *D*. In each case, the chord's bottom interval is a second and the top interval a fifth or sixth. This contrast of small and large intervals gives the voicings a very different sound from standard major, minor, augmented, and diminished triads.

Lines from clusters. In Examples 2, 3, and 4, we arpeggiate these voicings to produce melodic lines. Notice how the lines sound like they're composed of intervals, rather than from

a series of scale tones. Refreshing!

Scale-based lines have predictable fingerings, which can lead you into pattern playing. To subvert this tendency, play these interval-drenched lines using different fretting-hand fingerings. Try to find at least two ways to work through each example. As notated, pick each note, then try to spice the lines up with occasional slides, hammer-ons, and pull-offs. ■

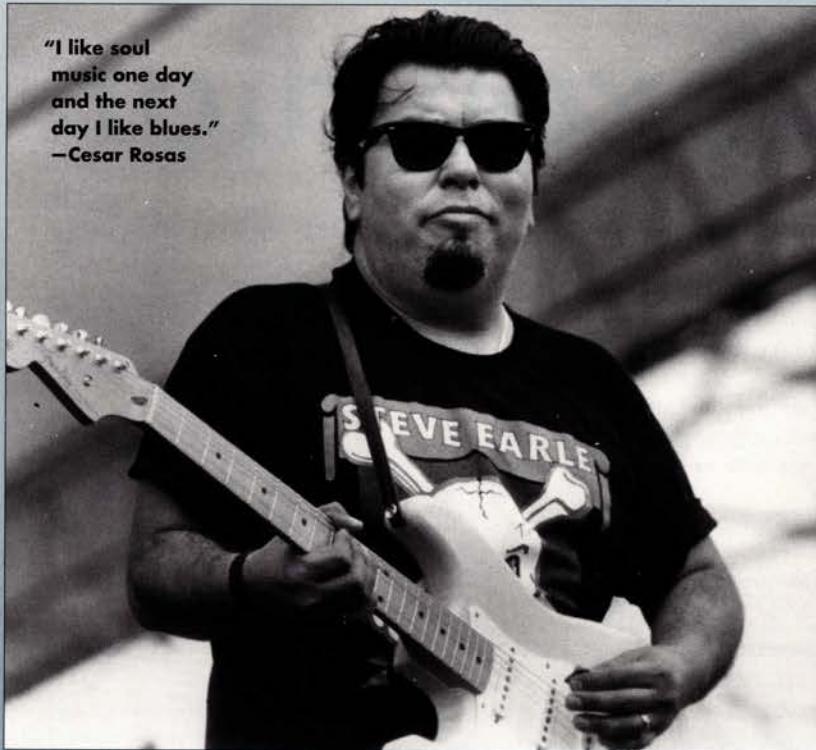
National Guitar Workshop instructor Erik Halbig has performed with Scott Henderson, Frank Gambale, and Will Ray. Halbig's *Power Pentatonics* and *Contemporary Country Guitar Improvisation* are published by Alfred/Workshop.

Ex. 1
Ex. 2
Ex. 3
Ex. 4


Cesar Rosas on Tracking with Dylan

IN THE LATE '80S, BOB DYLAN

invited Cesar Rosas, Los Lobos' lefty guitarist, into the recording studio to cut some tracks. "When I got to the studio," Rosas recalls, "he was working with some country guys on old hillbilly songs—stuff that was so cool. He's got a strange way of working, but I liked it. Basically, he had his guitar strapped on, a mic in front of him, and a bunch of lyrics. We all sat around in the studio with our headphones on, not knowing what the next song was going to be. Then he'd start jamming. Pretty soon, everybody would get a feel for the song, and the bass player would come in, then the drummer, then everyone else. We'd keep playing until it got really intense. After 15 or 20 minutes of nonstop playing, when everybody was warmed up to the song, he'd say, 'Start the machine.' If the first take came out good, he'd keep it. He likes to work off the first impression you get of the song, which is usually the best way."



L i c k o f t h e M o n t h

MERGING TRIADS

RANDY FEIFER, A GUITAR

teacher in the Washington, D.C., area who hails from Bethesda, Maryland, submitted this month's winning lick. "The phrase is cool," he writes, "because it combines two ideas—arpeggiated *E* and *B* triads—on the first and

second strings. You can use this riff over an *E* chord."

Once you've played through

the lick picking every note as written, make it as legato as possible using hammers and

pulls. For fun, throw on some slapback echo—something between 50ms and 100ms.

Send us your candidate for Lick of the Month (preferably notated *and* on cassette), along with a brief explanation of why it's cool and how to play it. If we select your offering, you'll get a funky cus-

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phone number. Materials won't be returned, and please don't call the office to check the status of your submission. You'll get your shirt if your lick is chosen.



Mixolydian Magic

BY ANDY ELLIS

FOR THE PAST TWO ISSUES, WE'VE been exploring modes. October's "Modes in a Nutshell" offered an overview of how modes are constructed and how they relate to major scales, and November's "Dancing with Dorian" explained how Dorian works with minor-7th chords.

We've learned how modes are especially

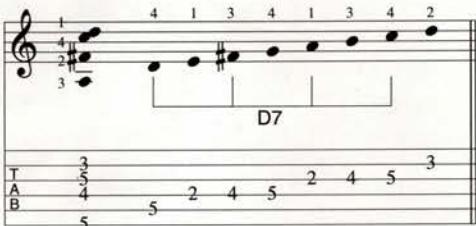
Ex. 3

♩ = 84-112

Gtr. 1 D Mixolydian

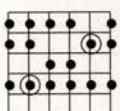
Ex. 1

D7 D Mixolydian

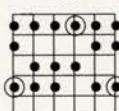


Ex. 2

Mixolydian



Mixolydian



1

D Mixolydian

B♭ Mixolydian

T A B

Gtr. 1

T A B

Gtr. 2

T A B

Tips Jar

"In the few lessons

I took with Jim

Hall, part of what

he had me do

was harmonize

scales—first with

triads, then with

random intervals.

So now, instead of thinking of a chord form, I'll have whatever scale is available and whatever intervallic combinations I like."

—BILL FRISSELL, APRIL '85 GP



handy for improvising melodically over progressions with shifting tonal centers. The trick is to become familiar with each mode's unique character, and learn to associate it with a corresponding chord type.

Dominant flavors. This time out, we'll focus on the Mixolydian mode and its close relationship with dominant chords. Look at Ex. 1. First play the *D7* voicing to get its sound in your ears, and then play through the adjacent one-octave *D* Mixolydian pattern. Notice how *D7*'s chord tones—*D*, *F#*, *A*, *C*—lie within *D* Mixolydian. These chord tones (1, 3, 5, \flat 7) are separated by neighboring scale tones a whole-step or a half-step away. The concept is simple: A *D7* arpeggio resides inside *D* Mixolydian. This is true for any dominant-7th arpeggio and any Mixolydian mode that share the same root. For example, *A7* lies within *A* Mixolydian and *E7* lies within *E* Mixolydian.

Now ascend and descend through Ex. 2's two Mixolydian patterns. (These forms are moveable, and their roots are circled.) For example, play the first pattern at the second position to get *D* Mixolydian, then strum *D7* to create a harmonic context. Next play the second pattern at the seventh position to once again generate *D* Mixolydian, and strum *D7*. To satisfy yourself that each *D* Mixolydian pattern contains *D7* chord tones, listen for them and then identify them on the fretboard.

Chord tones are only part of the story. The neighboring scale tones provide tension that the stable chord tones release. A well-constructed solo balances these two sounds.

There are dozens of useful Mixolydian patterns—in fact, you can easily convert any

major scale to Mixolydian by simply lowering the major scale's 7 a half-step to \flat 7. (For a complete listing of all seven mode formulas, see the Oct. '99 Back Track.)

Lift off. Let's try some Mixolydian magic. Ex. 3 is a repeating eight-bar progression with shifting tonal centers. All four chords are dominant 7s, so you can play the corresponding Mixolydian mode over each R&B riff: *D* Mixolydian for *D7*, *B* \flat Mixolydian for *B* \flat 7, *G* Mixolydian for *G7*, and *C* Mixolydian for *C7*.

Record at least 24 bars of this progression (Gtr. 2). Before improvising, play Gtr. 1 with its two-bar, two-octave ascending Mixolydian patterns.

Soaring. As we saw last month, stepping through a mode one note at a time isn't improvising. You need to find melodic pathways through the pattern before you're making music. Remember:

- Use interval jumps to generate interesting melodic contours. Skipping strings automatically creates wide intervals.
- Don't cram all the scale tones into each two-bar segment. Let your ears guide you to a few cool notes for each chord.
- Vary your rhythms—sustain some notes and rip through others.
- Include a few chromatic passing tones to connect one scale tone with another. Non-scale tones are dissonant and work best on upbeats.
- Use hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and bends to lend a vocal quality to your lines.

Coda. Once you can groove through Ex. 3, you're on your way to mastering Mixolydian. The next step is to work Mixolydian phrases into your songs and

solos. Look for extended dominant-7th vamps, and when you find one, drop into Mixolydian instead of the blues scale. For inspiration, listen to classic Jerry Garcia improvisations—he often visited the Mixolydian mode in Grateful Dead jams. ■

All of us—no matter how long we've played or how skilled we are—have gaps in our knowledge. Back Track is an ongoing Sessions series designed to fill these holes and inspire musical breakthroughs. Got a topic you'd like to see us address? Send your question to Back Track, c/o *Guitar Player*, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402, or e-mail it to guitplyr@mfi.com.

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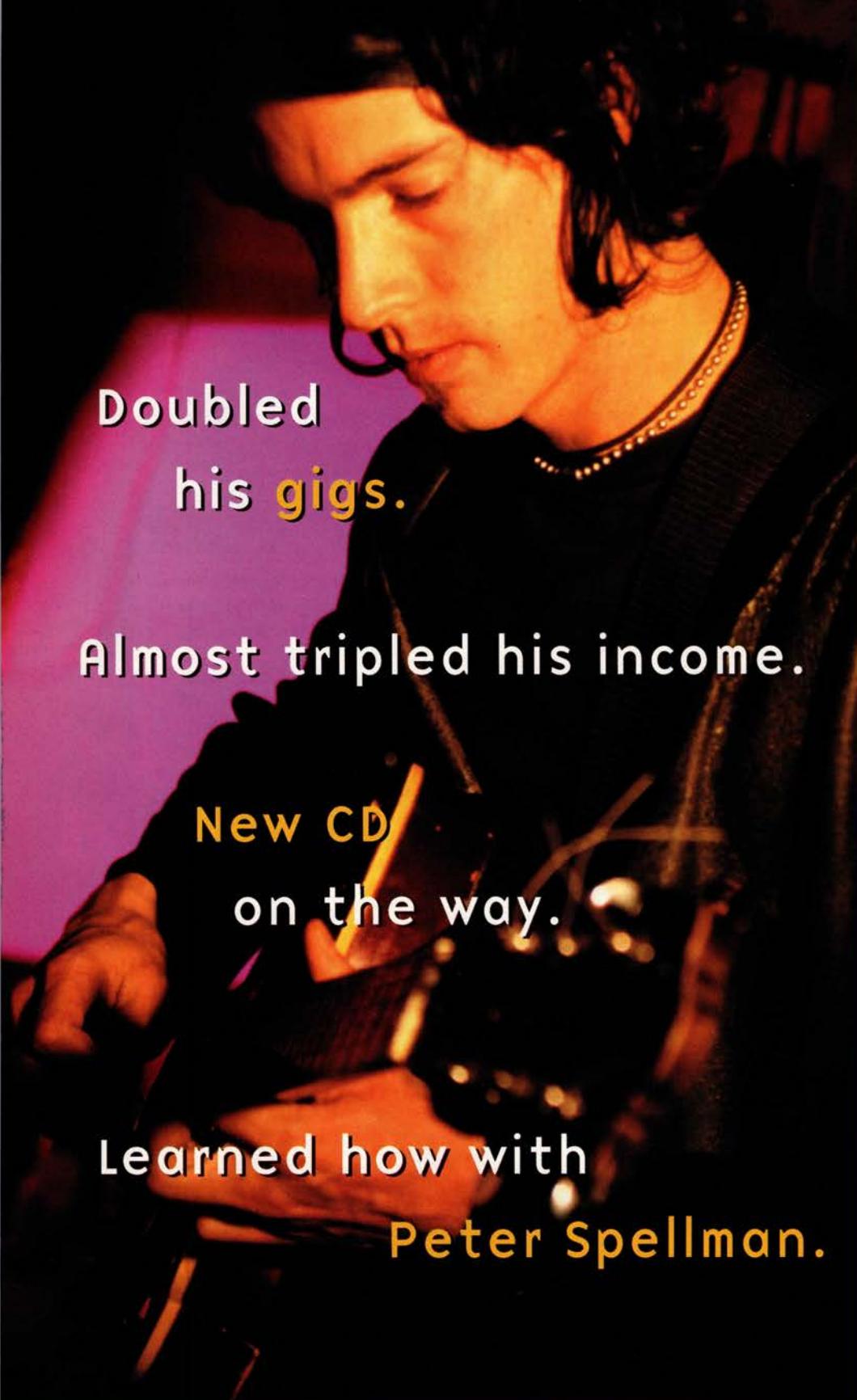
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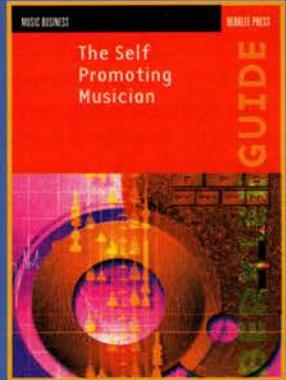
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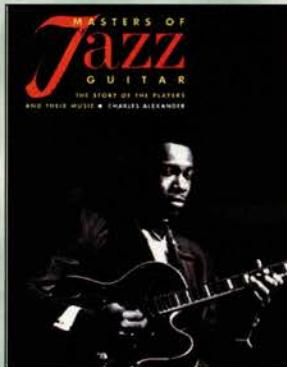
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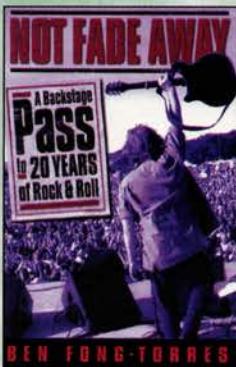
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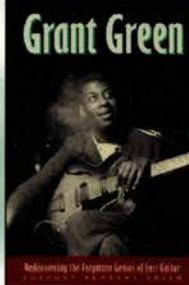
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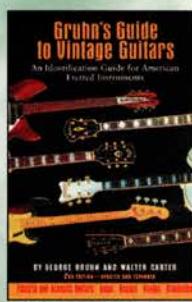
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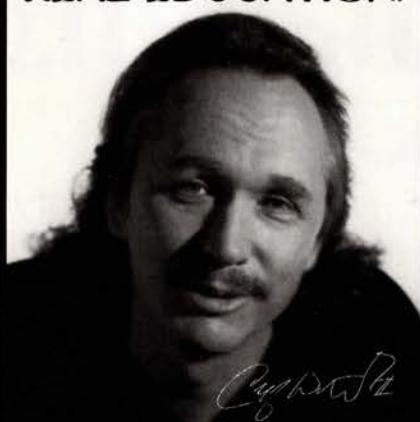
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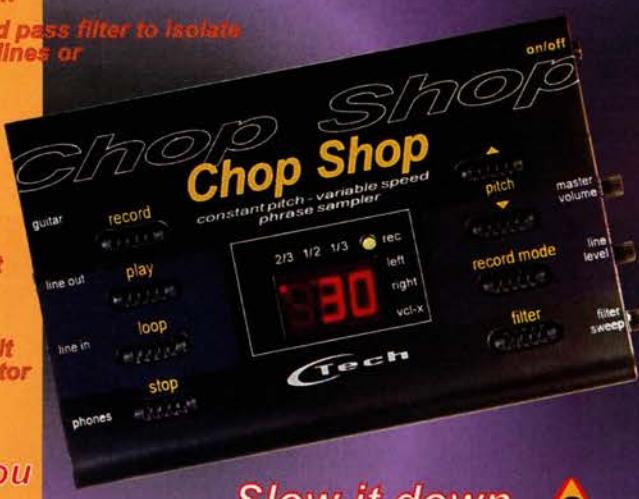
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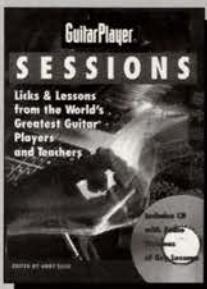
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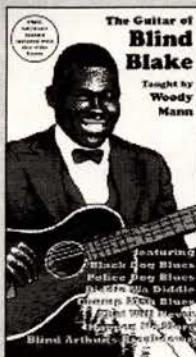
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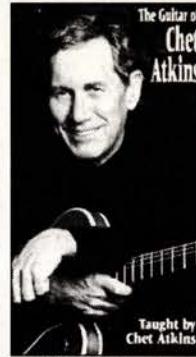
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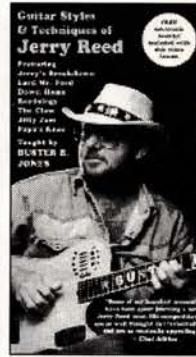
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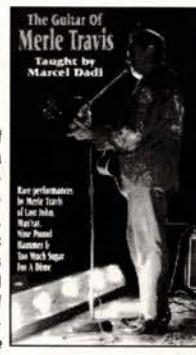
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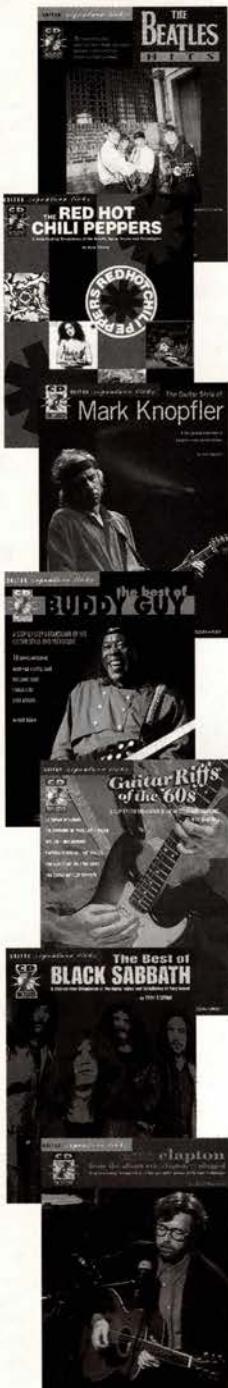


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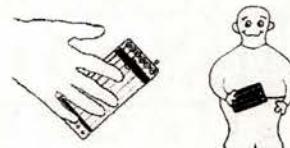
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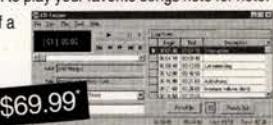
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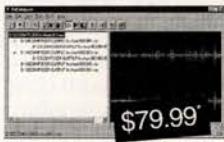
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Encore

After the failure of the 1958 Flying V and Explorer (their elevation to vintage guitar's Mount Olympus didn't come until later), Gibson president Ted McCarty enlisted Ray Dietrich, a car designer from Detroit, to design a guitar that was radical but not *too* radical. You know, something that would actually sell.

It worked. The new guitars were called Firebirds. The original series, built from mid 1963 to mid '65, featured a "reverse" body style—so called because of its higher treble-side horn. (The later, non-reverse Firebirds are of marginal interest to collectors.) The series comprised four models—all had mahogany bodies; distinctive pickups with small, rectangular covers and concealed polepieces; white/black/white triple-ply pickguards with beveled edges; 22 frets; and neck-through-body construction.

"Any time you glue two pieces of wood together, there's going to be a little change in how solid the instrument is," explained McCarty, "and that's why we came up with this full-length idea instead of gluing the neck into a slot in the body."

Another striking detail was the peghead design. McCarty chose perpendicular Kluson banjo-style tuners because he wanted to make sure no one would think the new Gibson was in any way a Fender copy.

The clean, uncluttered frost-blue '63 Firebird I (originally \$189.50) is identified by its single pickup. The cardinal red '64/'65-era Firebird V (originally \$325) is identified by its trapezoid markers—also note the Deluxe Vibrola's long, nickel-plated panel with leaf-and-lyre engraving. The sunburst Firebird VII (originally \$445) was the top-of-the-line model with three pickups, gold hardware, rectangular markers, a marker at the first fret, and an ebony fingerboard. (Not shown is the Firebird III, which had two pickups with a 3-way selector, a



bound fingerboard with dots, and a simple but effective bent-metal Gibson Vibrola.)

"The VII shown here—one of only 20 made in 1963—is differentiated from later models by its center section, which is 2-piece laminate instead of the 9-piece

laminate used for '64s and '65s," says Perry A. Margouleff, the owner of these three beauties.

The reverse models sold respectably. Although it's misleading to rely on Gibson shipping records—the 1965 figures cover both reverse *and* non-reverse

models, for example—A.R. Duchossoir, author of *Gibson Electrics: The Classic Years*, estimates the following sales totals for the reverse models: 1,000 Firebird Is, 2,000 IIIs, 700 Vs, and 250 VIIIs. Photo by John Peden.

—TOM WHEELER

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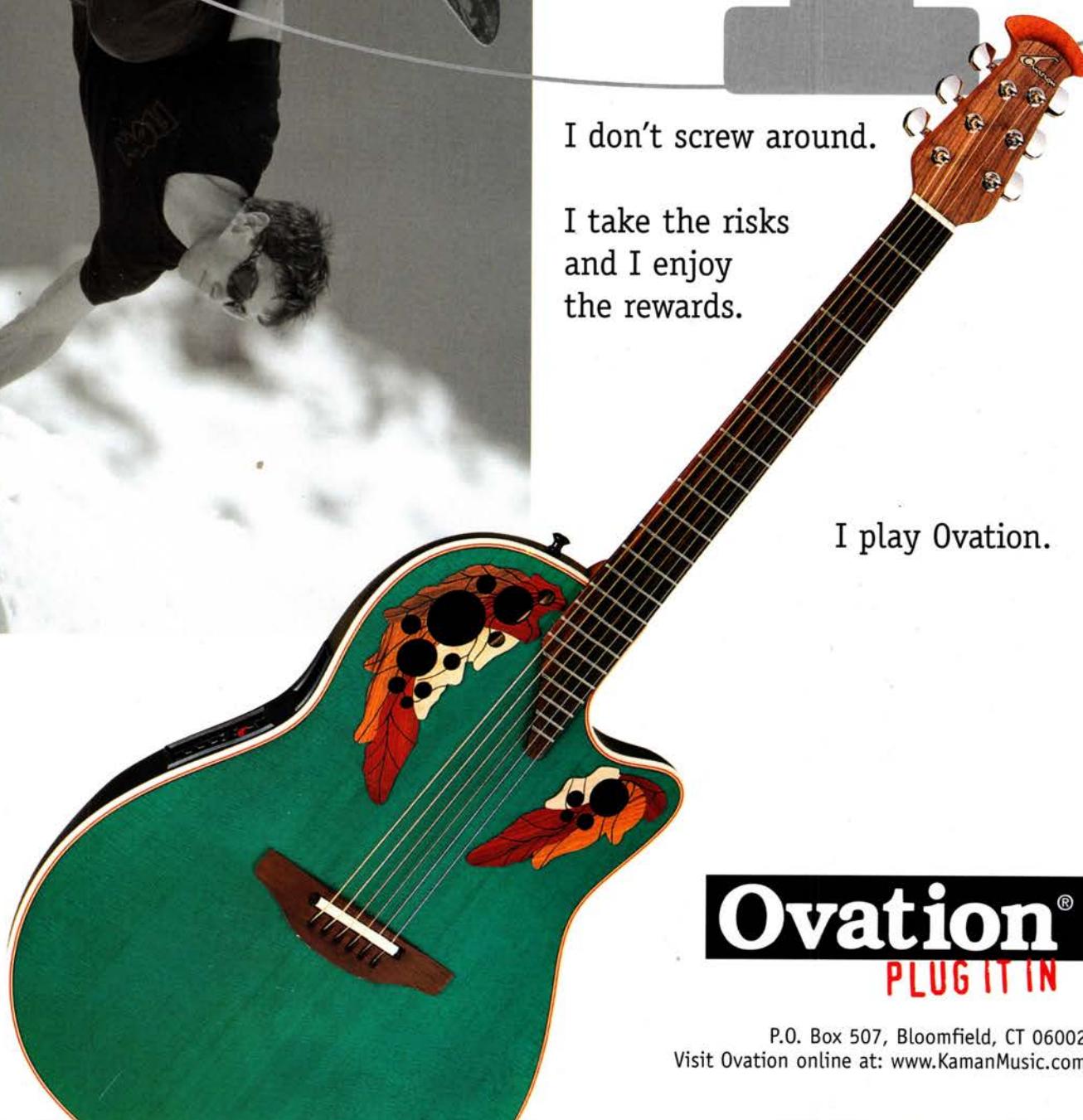
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